

Surviving Hurricane Sa

When her New York City community was devastated by the storm, one girl decided to help rebuild hope



Making connections As you read the two stories on these pages, think about how hurricanes affected people in Rockaway and New Orleans and how they responded.



**LOOK FOR
WORD NERD'S 8
WORDS IN BOLD**

BY LAUREN TARSHIS

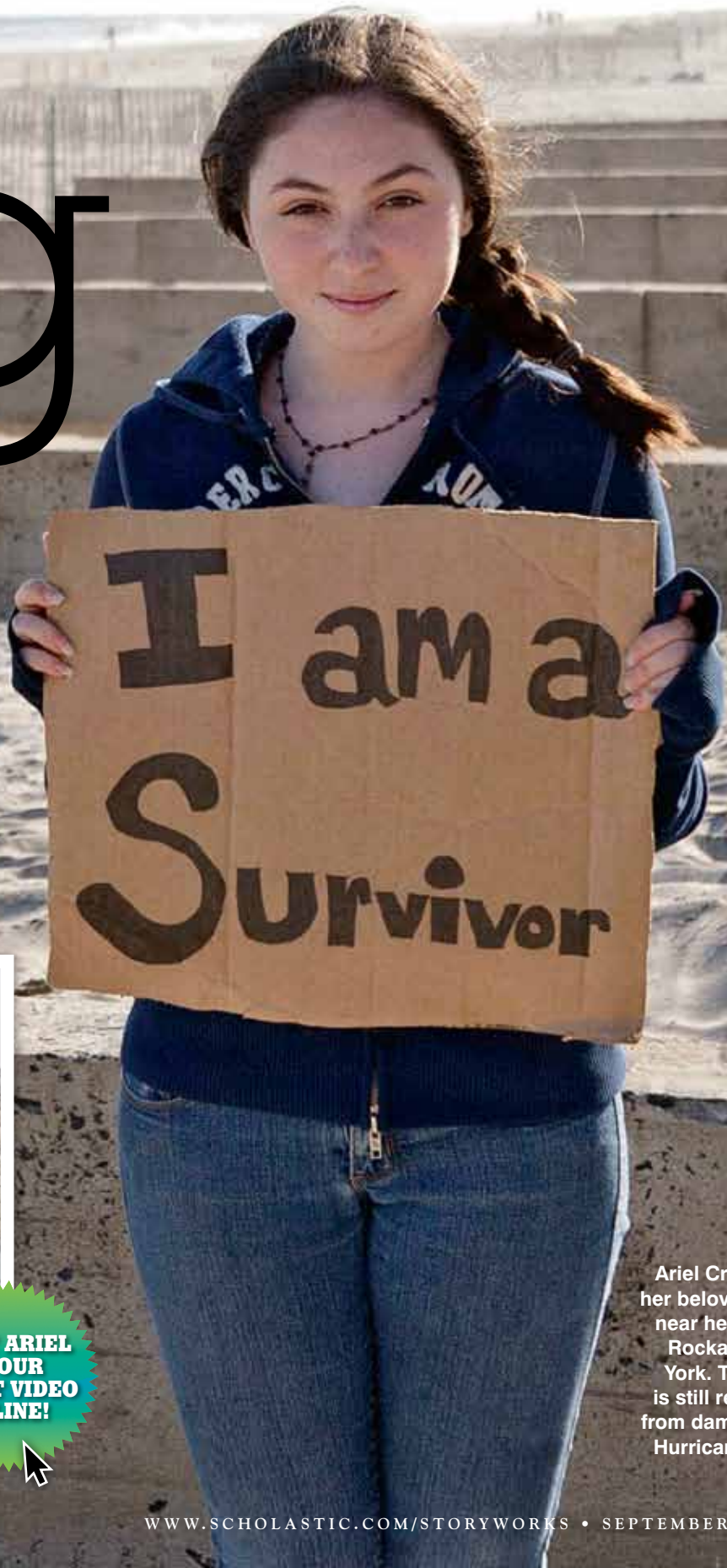
Ariel Creamer, 14, has always felt lucky to live in Rockaway, New York. The community sits on an 11-mile **peninsula**, a sliver of land that juts into the ocean. Though Rockaway is part of New York City, some areas have the feel of a seaside resort. Ariel's house is just half a block from the beach. She can see the ocean from her house and hear the waves as she drifts off to sleep. "It's the ocean that makes this place so special," she says.

But on October 29, 2012, the ocean turned ferocious. That was the night Hurricane Sandy slammed into the East Coast of the U.S. The storm was enormous—as large as the state of Texas.

Hurricane Sandy's winds fueled a raging fire that destroyed 126 homes, like this one.



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Ariel Creamer on her beloved beach near her home in Rockaway, New York. The beach is still recovering from damage from Hurricane Sandy.

It hit with devastating power. Scores of people died. Hundreds of communities suffered major damage.

Rockaway was hit especially hard. During the storm, the wild waters of the Atlantic **surg**ed over the beach, flooding neighborhoods up and down the peninsula. Thousands of homes were badly damaged. Some were destroyed. Just blocks from Ariel's home, a sweeping fire broke out. More than 100 stores, restaurants, and houses burned to the ground.

Last-Minute Escape

Ariel's family had planned to ride out the hurricane in their home, but just hours before the storm hit, Ariel's father decided it was too dangerous to stay. The family escaped just before the city's bridges closed and stayed with relatives in nearby Brooklyn.

When they returned to Rockaway the morning after the storm, their neighborhood was in ruins. Roads were clogged with sand and wreckage. The playground where Ariel used to take her little sister and brother was now in the bay.

Ariel's house had been hit hard as well. The basement was

Damage to Rockaway was severe, and many structures have not yet been fixed. Look at the map to the right. Why was Rockaway hit especially hard by rising waters and Sandy's winds?



flooded, and the heat, hot water, and electricity were knocked out for nearly three weeks. Ariel and her siblings went to stay with their aunt and cousins in Chicago while their parents cleaned up the house. Ten days later, the family was back together at home.

But Rockaway was a disaster zone. The **tight-knit** community was in shock. There was no power or running water. Many of Ariel's friends had lost their homes to flooding or fire and were living far away. Ariel's school had been damaged. To get to its new location in Brooklyn, Ariel had to **commute** an hour each way by bus.

In those first months, Ariel missed her old life—her friends, her walks on the beach, and her favorite restaurant, which had burned down. People were suffering all around her, especially the poor and elderly. As the weather got colder, people stood shivering in long lines for water and other necessities.

A Silver Lining

But Ariel felt inspired by the people who were working to help Rockaway heal. Volunteers came from around the country with carloads of donated clothing and toys. Neighbors devoted all of their spare time to helping others rebuild.



Teenagers climbed dozens of flights of stairs to bring water and food to elderly people trapped without power—or elevator service—in high-rise buildings. “My mom told me you can’t control what happens to you,” Ariel says. “But you can always choose how you want to deal with it.” Ariel’s choice was to help.

She created Survivors Silver Lining, a Facebook page that matches survivors in need with **donors** who want to help. She built the page late one February night, posting information about a 9-year-old boy named Patrick who’d lost his entire Lego collection when his house burned down. Within days, Patrick’s Legos had been replaced.

In the coming months, Ariel’s page would help many kids: Christopher, who received a new Nook; brothers Charlie and John, who got a new drum set and keyboard. Ariel has also worked with other organizations to bring much-needed donations to Rockaway. This work has made her something of a celebrity. In April, she traveled to the White House, in Washington,

D.C., where she was honored as a Hurricane Sandy Champion of Change.

Today, the scars of destruction are still visible in Rockaway. But hope is in the air, blowing in the salty ocean breeze. The streets are clean, and many homes are being rebuilt.

“I can’t imagine living anywhere but Rockaway,” Ariel says. “My neighborhood will be back, even stronger than before.” 🌪️

INFORMATIONAL TEXT

After Hurricane Katrina: New Orleans Bounces Back

Hurricane Katrina, which struck the U.S. Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, was one of the worst natural disasters in American history.

More than 1,800 people were killed. The storm caused destruction all along the Louisiana and Mississippi coastlines. But it was the city of New Orleans that suffered the most **catastrophic** damage.

New Orleans is unique in America, a **vibrant** city famous for its music, its food, and its architecture. It’s also prone to flooding.

New Orleans sits near the Gulf of Mexico and is crisscrossed by rivers and canals. Decades ago, engineers constructed a system of levees—huge walls made of earth—to protect the city from floods. Experts always said that these levees would not be strong enough to survive a powerful hurricane. Katrina proved them tragically right. Many levees failed during Katrina, and 80 percent of the city flooded. In the months after Katrina, many predicted the city would never recover. There was too much damage, they said. Hundreds of thousands of people left, many for good.

But today, much of the city has **rebounded**. Tens of thousands of homes have been rebuilt. Problems remain, such as high crime and poverty. Some neighborhoods are still badly scarred. But overall, many report that the city is as vibrant as it was before Katrina.

In the words of a famous blues song by Earl King,
“Ain’t no city like New Orleans!”



In some areas of New Orleans, floodwaters were 15 feet deep.

WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

Rockaway and New Orleans were each devastated by a hurricane. What do you think Ariel and other residents of Rockaway could learn from the people of New Orleans? Use specific details from both articles in your answer.

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