

Healing Through Art: Creative development for wellbeing with Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Porch Light



Student Interns:
Cody Ritz, Drexel University College of Medicine
Laceybelle Todd, Drexel University, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Music Therapy and Counseling

Academic Preceptor:
Michele Rattigan, MA, ATR-BC, NCC, LPC, Drexel University, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Creative Arts Therapies

Community Preceptors:
Pamela Draper, MMT, MTBC, Mural Arts Porch Light Program, Kensington Storefront
Melissa Fogg, MSW, Mural Arts Porch Light Program, Southeast by Southeast



COMMUNITY PARTNER



Photo by Steve Walick.



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“Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Porch Light Program, a **joint collaboration with the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services**, focuses on achieving universal health and wellness among Philadelphians by offering opportunities to contribute to meaningful works of public art. Porch Light projects are driven by issues that have tangible effects on local communities, such as **mental health, substance use, spirituality, homelessness, trauma, immigration, war, and neighborhood safety.**”

“The targeted outcomes of any Porch Light project include **improvements to the physical environment, new opportunities for social connections, and positive changes within a community**—such as enhanced unity and empathy among neighbors.” <https://www.muralarts.org/program/porch-light/>

MAIN PROJECT

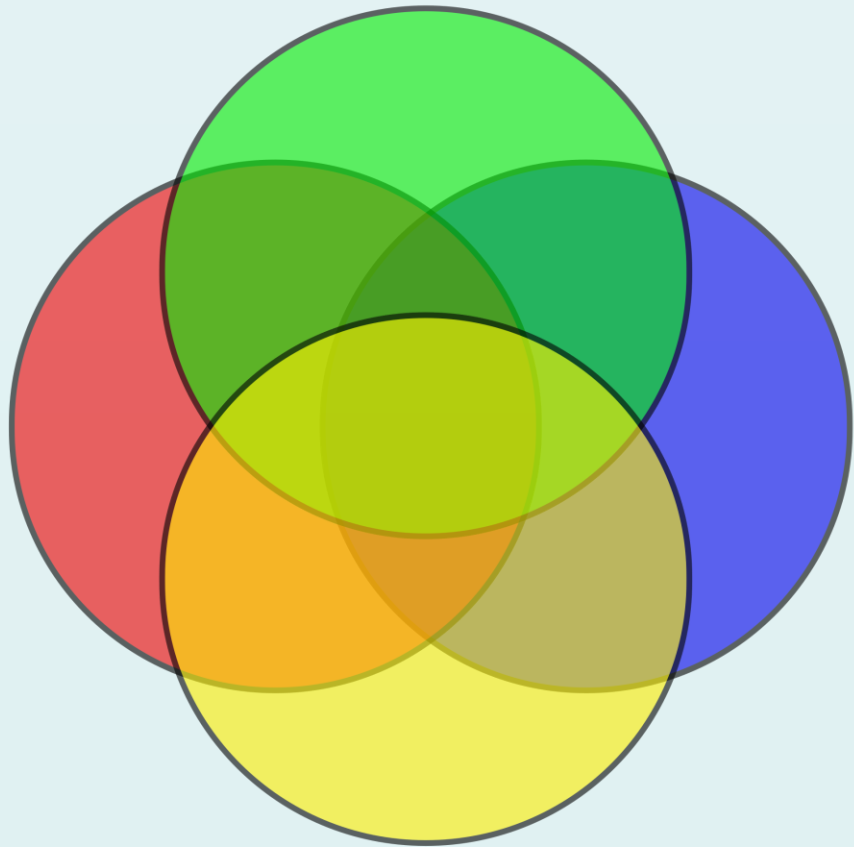
At Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Porch Light Program, our primary project entailed planning a **weekly music and arts group** for children and adolescents at Kensington’s McPherson Square Library with integrated health topics. Other activities included **pop-up art workshops, mural instillations, storefront cleanups, community meetings, online mentoring/tutoring, a collection of participant stories, and various artist-led programs** throughout the area. Outreach took place across different parts of the city and themes of cardiovascular health, smoking cessation, and oral hygiene/health were applied when appropriate. Presentations and health promotion materials for current and future use by Porch Light were also created.



Music Therapy & Medicine

How to integrate the two?

Overall well-being is *intersectional* → this requires an *interdisciplinary* approach



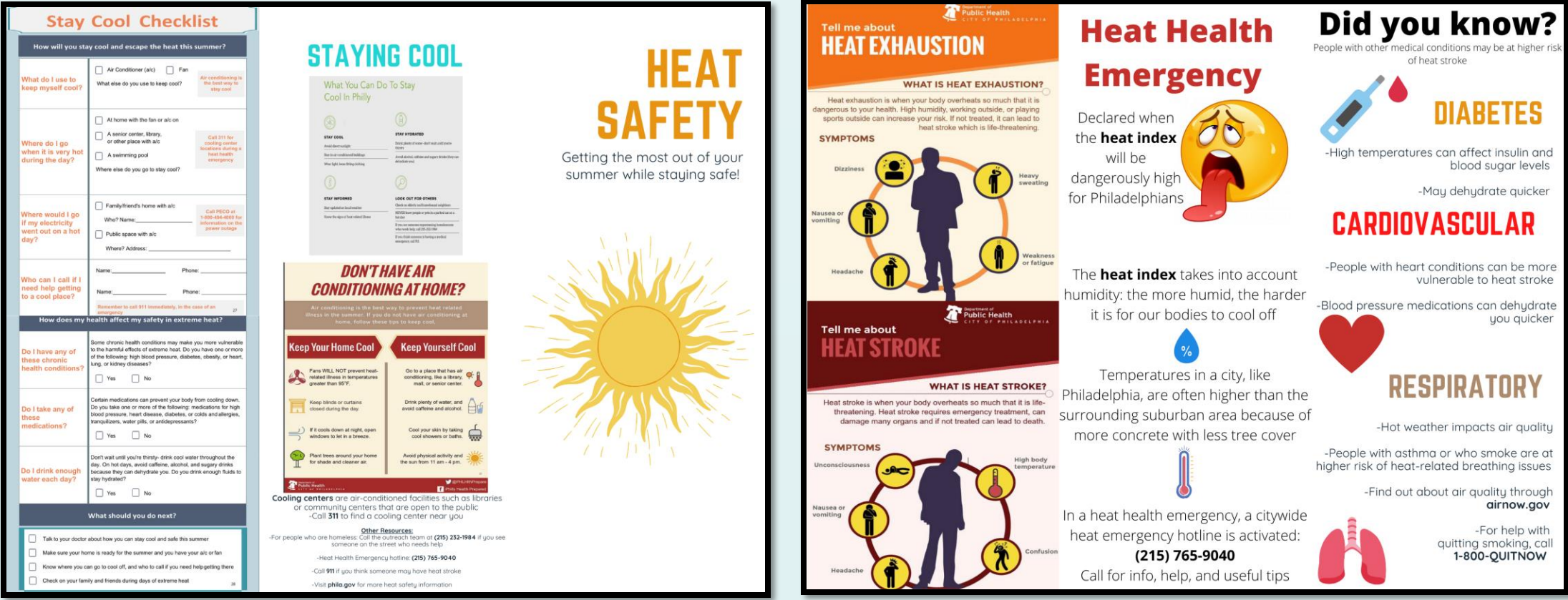
McPherson Square Library



Other Projects



Health Promotion Materials



Heat Safety Participant Brochure

Staff Presentations



REFLECTION

Laceybelle Todd: “Being a part of the Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Porch Light Program has opened my eyes and heart to a new population. Exposure to gentrification, the opioid epidemic, unsheltered youth, and poverty must be experienced to be understood. My experience with BTG provided me an opportunity to see and feel the impact that these community programs have on the city’s underserved populations. I’m forever aware of the need to not only support but enable growth in the community. As a music therapist and counseling student I am blown away by the different ways that music can be beneficial to a person. BTG helped open my eyes to community music therapy, how it can be immensely life changing for an individual. I am grateful to have worked alongside Cody, a medical student who brought a broader perspective and engineered thoughts and ideas. Philadelphia taught me this summer and the people inhabiting it changed me.”

Cody Ritz: “Coming from a different part of the country to attend medical school in Philadelphia, Bridging the Gaps appealed to me because I wanted an opportunity to better acquaint myself with the city and its people. I could not be more grateful for the time I spent with Porch Light. They have given me an opportunity to grow and develop my own perspective by learning from those around me. Whether it was with program participants, local artists, community partners, other interns, or Porch Light’s interdisciplinary staff, I feel privileged to have shared creative space with such a diversified group of people and benefitted from their light and energy. A city is only as good as its people, and Philadelphia is lucky to have a program that prioritizes creative development for its residents, regardless of whether they were born here or are new arrivals.”