

Bridging the Gaps



Lewis Katz School of Medicine



Farm to Families
ST. CHRISTOPHER'S FOUNDATION for Children



urban
bioethics

Farm to Families: A Picture Says a Thousand Words

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COMMUNITY PARTNER

Farm to Families (F2F) is an initiative of the St. Christopher's Foundation for Children. The program supplies families in Philadelphia with boxes of fresh, high-quality, organic produce at a reduced cost. Boxes are delivered to clients weekly and are packed with local, seasonal fruits and vegetables. Program sites are located throughout the city at local health care providers. The BTG student team worked at the Temple University Hospital site in North Philadelphia. The North Philadelphia community is a food desert, and many individuals in this community experience serious health challenges, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. The mission of the Farm to Families program is to address chronic health conditions related to poor diet by increasing the affordability and availability of fresh produce in the North Philadelphia community.

Website: <https://scfchildren.org/farm-to-families-initiative/>

PROJECT

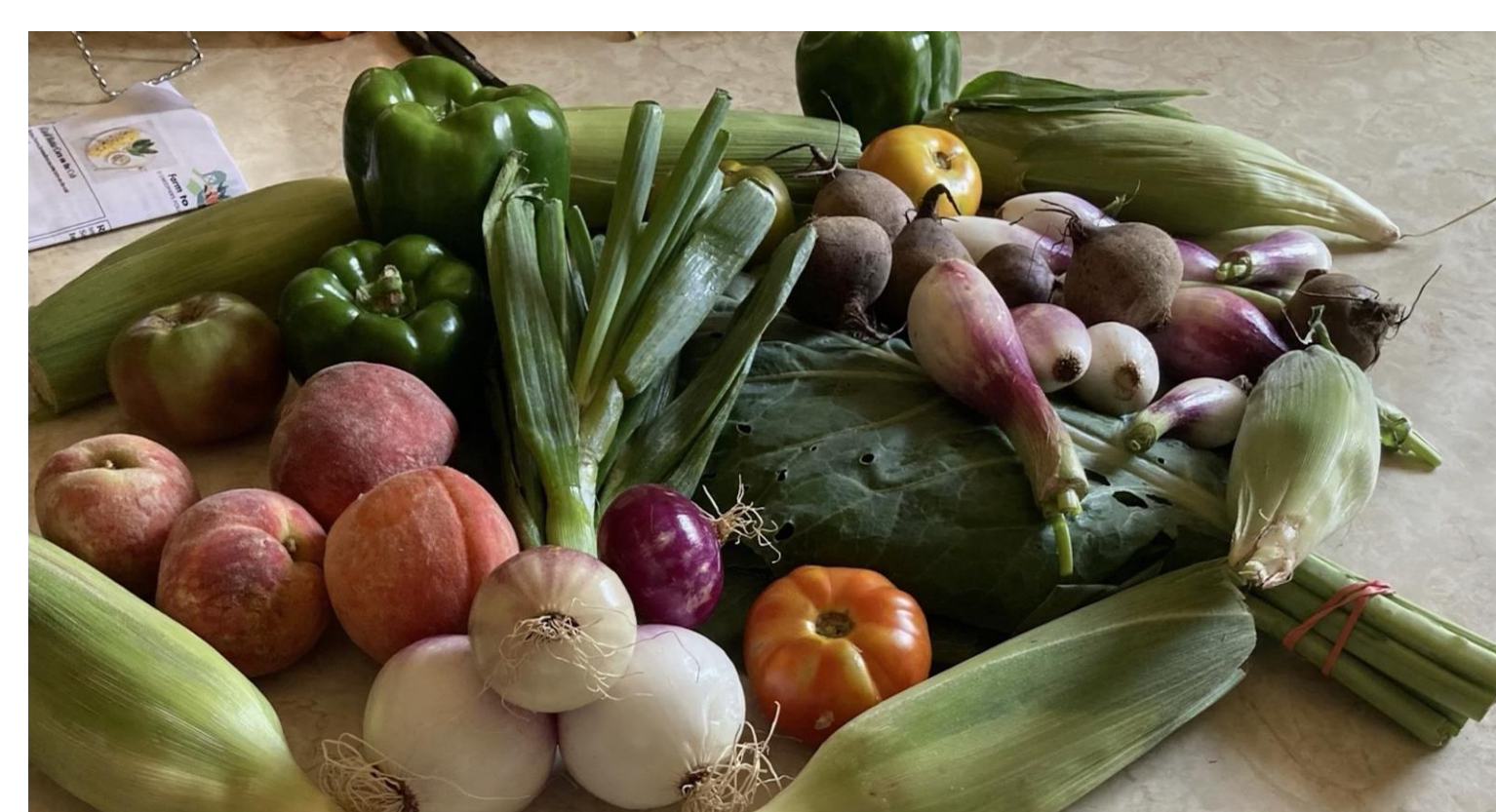
The F2F student team contributed to several projects this summer: interviewing clients to better understand the impacts of the program, collecting recipes from clients to create an online recipe book, and assisting with taking clients' weekly food orders.

Client Interviews: These were semi-structured, qualitative interviews that were transcribed and will be coded for themes that emerge. These themes will help inform how the program can be improved to help support clients' food goals and capacity for health. Additionally, the students provided F2F clients with disposable cameras and asked them to take pictures of the food they receive and the food they prepare. F2F student interns conducted photovoice interviews with these clients and plan to culminate the project with a focus group of participants in the fall.

Online Recipe Book: Prior to Summer 2021, The F2F program received feedback from its participants that they would like access to more recipes. One of the strengths of the program is that clients are exposed to new types of produce. Sometimes clients receive produce that they do not know how to prepare. The recipe book allows for clients to share recipes they've used to prepare Farm to Families produce. The summer interns contacted each client and asked them to share their recipes. Farm to Families clients will have access to this recipe book online, and it will be expanded as the program continues.

Weekly Food Orders: Each week, F2F clients place their order to choose what items will be delivered from Lancaster farms to their homes. The student interns had the opportunity to form relationships with F2F clients throughout the summer, as they were calling them each week to assist with their food order. The students were involved with taking clients' orders, serving as a liaison between the client and the program director. In addition to troubleshooting any issues that arose with clients' orders, the students provided companionship to clients.

PROJECT RESULTS



Photos taken by Farm to Families clients through photovoice interviews. Pictured: Produce from the weekly boxes and meals made using some of the Farm to Families fruits and vegetables.

Some broad themes from our client interviews:

- Eating fresh fruits and vegetables is a priority and is necessary for many clients to feel they are taking care of their health. Clients reported that incorporating more produce into their diets improved their mood, energy levels, and sense of healthfulness.
- Some clients' participation in F2F greatly increased the amounts of fresh produce they were able to eat in a week.
- The fruit and vegetable boxes introduced many clients to new fruits and vegetables, which led them to *share* with friends and neighbors and learn new recipes, some of which were from different cultures.
- Many of the clients shared that cooking is essential for them, and that their cooking habits stemmed from the habits of their families. Additionally, clients reflected that their current eating patterns were shaped by their childhood.
- Getting food delivery from F2F was helpful during the pandemic, when many of the clients tried to social distance as much as possible.

REFLECTION

Working with Farm to Families showed us how eliminating barriers to healthy living has the potential to leave lasting impacts. We learned how important it is to address the social determinants of health, particularly food insecurity, as they play a major role in patients' health and quality of life. Through our interviews with clients, we realized that providing subsidized fresh produce boxes to Philadelphia community members is just one piece of the puzzle to helping create and improve food access. Furthermore, we learned the importance of not just listening to, but hearing what the community members we interviewed had to say. We hope to incorporate what we learned this summer in our future careers, so that we can become physicians who know that learning and understanding community needs is the first step in advocating for our patients.