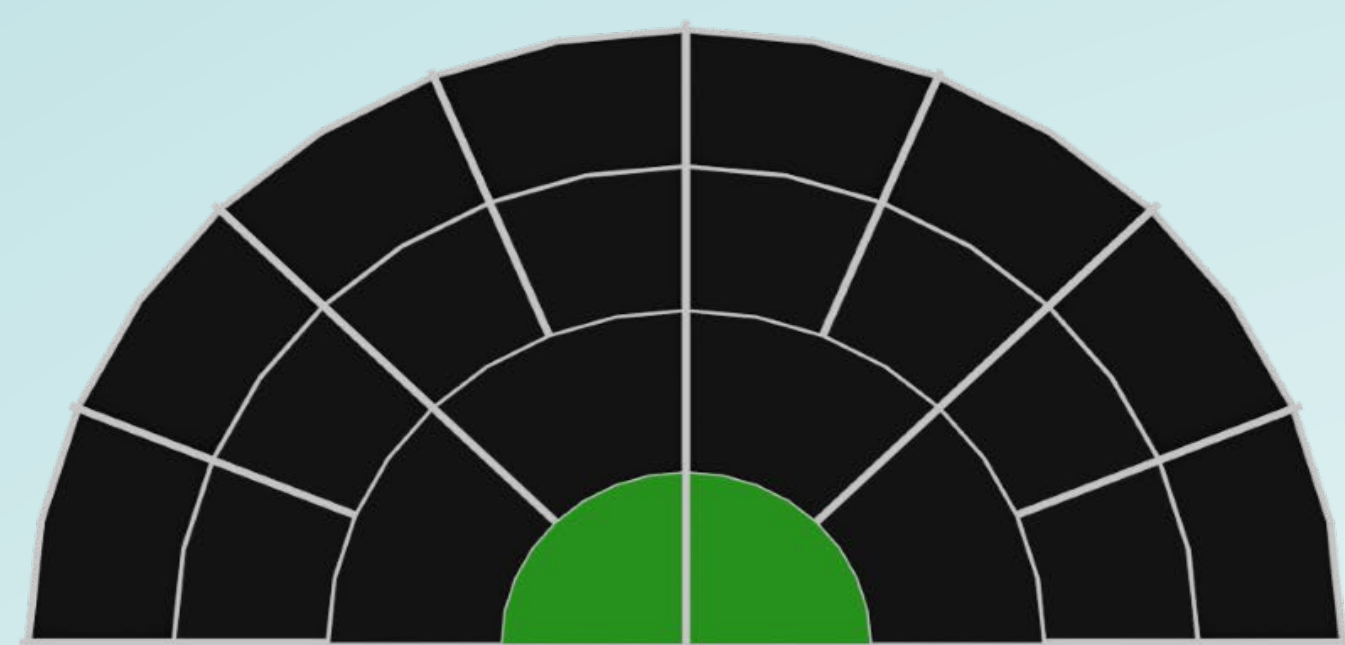
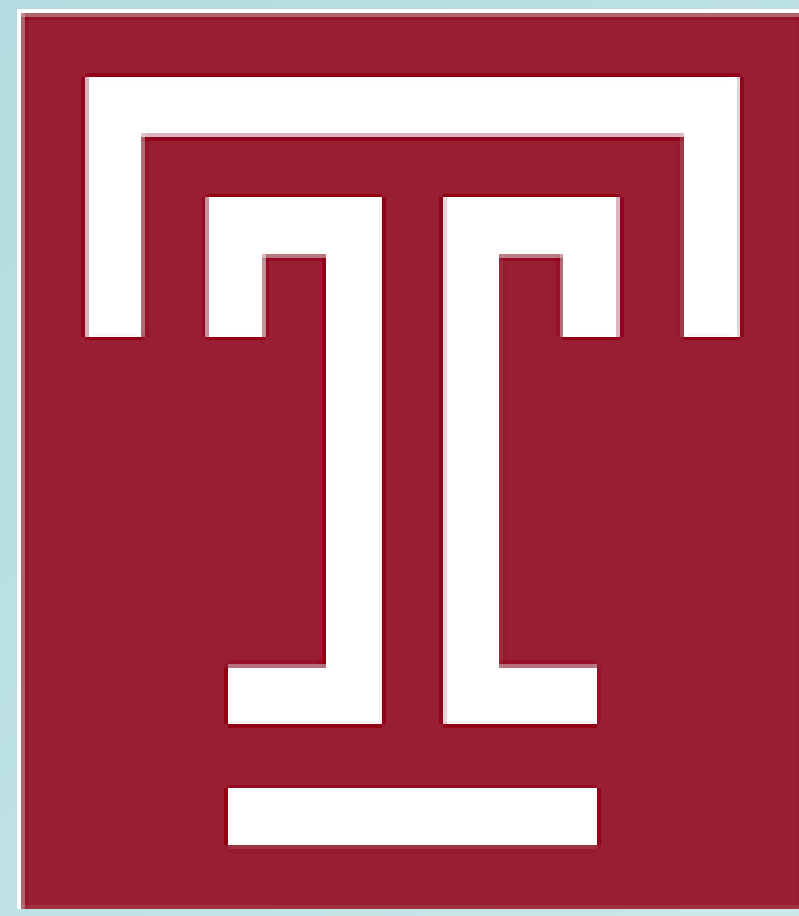


Bridging the Gaps

Title: Assessing Health, Wellness, and Diversity Among the 55+ Community at Center in the Park



Center in the Park

Student Interns:
Jacob Beckman, Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University
Olamide Sowole, BDS, Temple University, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences – College of Public Health

Denise Swygert-Huzzy, Temple University, School of Social Work – College of Public Health

Academic Preceptors:
Ingrid Mapanao, MSW, MPH, Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University
Brian Work, MD, MPH, Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University
Jerome Wright, Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University

Community Preceptors:
Cleo Smalls, MBA, Center Director, Center in the Park

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Center in the Park (CIP) is a non-profit senior community center dedicated to promoting positive aging and fostering community connections for their members. The Center provides older adults an opportunity to engage their minds, bodies, and spirits, asserting that growth and learning are lifelong pursuits. Located in the Germantown neighborhood of northwest Philadelphia, Center in the Park is available to adults 55+ from across the city. The Center offers community support and programming ranging from exercise and dance classes to piano lessons, art classes, housing counseling, nutrition assistance, and an on-site social worker.

<https://centerintheparkphila.org>

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

According to a recent Surgeon General's report, there is an American epidemic of loneliness and social isolation. The report suggests that older adults are particularly susceptible. Social isolation has been linked to higher rates of cardiovascular disease, stroke, depression, and dementia, further exacerbated by the intersection of multiple minority identities. Senior centers, like Center in the Park, offer older adults a third space to engage with each other and their community, to focus on their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. CIP and organizations like it, are essential for ensuring that our families and friends remain happy and healthy as they grow older.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps interns were each tasked with developing a plan to address an area of potential growth for the Center, to be presented to the Staff Leadership Team at the conclusion of the program. The interns were also asked to generate two separate presentations, one focused on health and wellness, the other focused on technology proficiency. The presentations were delivered to small groups of CIP members interested in the subjects. Each intern also spent the summer engaging with members and staff during community events like the Juneteenth celebration, sitting in on workshops, and distributing produce vouchers. Many meaningful relationships were built along the way.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The BTG storytelling project served as an opportunity to interview seven CIP members and make a ten-minute video highlighting their love for the center to be used in future advertising efforts.
- Reimagined the CIP post-workshop survey system to ensure member feedback is effectively collected, prioritized, and available to assist future grant writing efforts.
- Updated the CIP breakfast and lunch menu to increase member engagement in the Center's nutrition program.

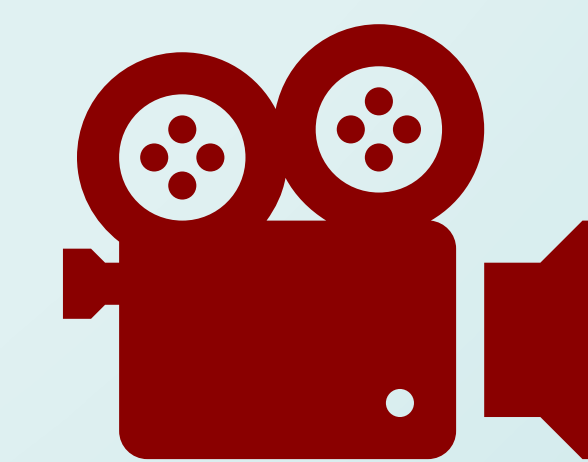


REFLECTIONS

Jacob Beckman: Prior to my time with CIP, most of my interactions with older adults were in the context of healthcare, a setting defined by illness that provides an incomplete understanding of what it means to grow old. CIP has imparted a refreshing and invaluable perspective on aging encapsulated by one of the Center's favorite slogans, "you're never too old and it's never too late." The support, wisdom, and kindness that I have received here will stick with me, and undoubtedly inform my practice as a physician in the future.

Olamide Sowole: During my time at CIP, I have learned a great deal about the value of healthy aging and the need for its promotion. Rather than neglecting the social needs of the elderly, CIP acts as a resource for nurturing, fostering, and promoting wholistic social and behavioral services to assist Germantown's aging population. CIP stands as a monument of the population health model of providing systematic intervention to a vulnerable community.

Denise Swygert-Huzzy: This internship allowed space for up close engagement with members, and a window into what it means to age positively in the Germantown area. As a School Social Worker pursuing a Master of Social Work, connecting with some of Philadelphia's aging population has prompted me to consider a concentration in geriatrics after graduation. The BTG experience will inarguably enhance how I move forward in my social work career.



Narrative Medicine Project

