

Bridging the Gaps



Immersed in Youth Day Camp at Southwest CDC- Learning through Play

Student Interns: Matthew Lam, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine; Katherine Tseng, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine
Academic Preceptors: Joan I. Gluch, PhD, RDH, PHDHP, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine
Community Preceptors: Shaketia Sills, Program Coordinator, Southwest Community Development Corporation; Lorraine Thomas, Operations Manager, Southwest Community Development Corporation

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Southwest Community Development Corporation is a program established by community members in 1987 to improve the quality of life in the Southwest Philadelphia community through their after-school programs, employment/workforce development, and housing services. This summer, Southwest Community Development Corporation provided a Youth Day Camp Service to students grades K-4 at the John M. Patterson School, which provides arts and crafts, games, dance, educational programs, and field trips to enrich students' education throughout the summer.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The youth day camp serves as a crucial local resource, providing children with a safe environment to learn and explore while building essential life skills and fostering a sense of community. The summer camp is free and offers meals and snacks, addressing economic and food-related concerns for some families in the underserved communities. Nationally, youth day camps are part of a larger network of youth development initiatives. The camps have the opportunities to establish partnership and advocate for youth development across the country.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps interns for this summer came from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. Their responsibilities included creating fun, interactive, and engaging lesson plans for the Youth Day Camp program at the John M. Patterson School, where each week travels through different themes from STEM to Arts/Music. Lessons this summer included engineering, oral health, physical fitness, arts and crafts. The lesson plans were intended to provide an educationally stimulating environment which embodies teamwork, support, and creativity for all students. Ultimately, the goal of the BTG interns for the summer was to create an welcoming, fun, and comfortable environment for kids to simply be kids and have fun in a safe space to let their individuality, creativity, and strengths show.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/CHALLENGES/JOYS



Oral Health lesson: storytelling about cavities with kindergarteners to second graders, demonstration of flossing and brushing, trivia activity with 3rd and 4th graders

REFLECTION

Matthew Lam " Participating in the BTG CHIP experience allowed me to immerse myself in the communities we serve as health care practitioners at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. Being able to work directly with the kids at the John M. Patterson School, creating long-lasting, meaningful, and trusting relationships with them strengthened my ability to communicate effectively with a team and widened my creativity in terms of thinking outside the box. Working with the kids everyday was full of surprises and my favorite part about working at Southwest CDC. The students are so bright, energetic, and full of life and it motivates me to put my best efforts out there no matter what. It is truly inspiring a truly rewarding experience being able to see the students have fun, laugh, cheer, and simply be kids. Learning about their lives, their passions, and dreams throughout the summer was heartwarming and motivational. With the unconditional support by Ms. Shaketia Sills, my summer at Southwest CDC with the staff and students was a rewarding experience I'll cherish throughout my life and career."

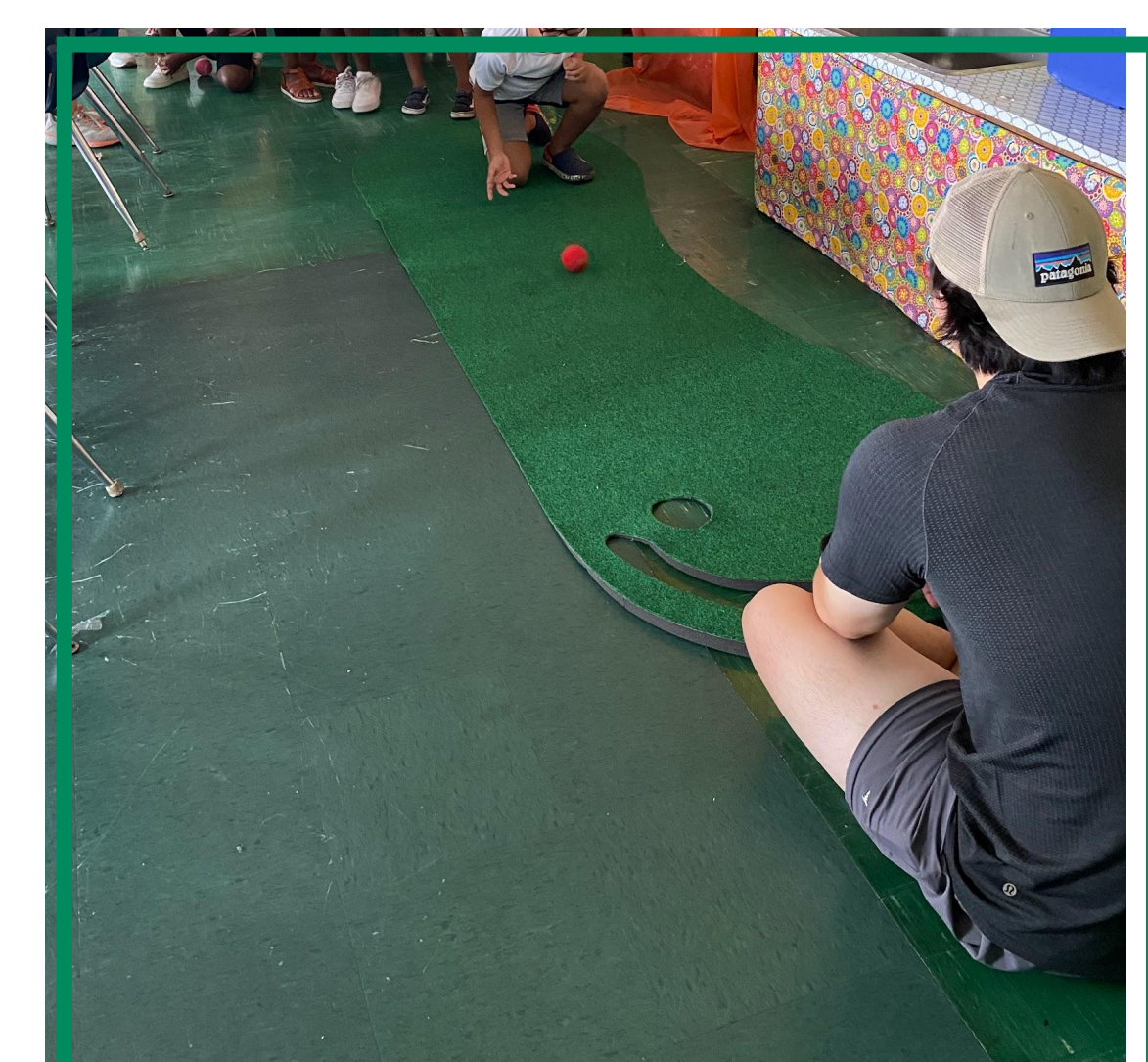
Katherine Tseng: " Through BTG, I had the opportunity to establish close connections with community members and engage with the children, allowing me to gain insights in their lifestyle. The kids were so much fun to work with, and I've learned to be flexible and adaptable throughout the experience. They were always engaged in the activities we prepared and I also genuinely enjoyed chatting with them about anything and everything. It was heartening to hear about their dreams and aspirations, and they shared their hopes with such pure and resolute looks. It made me realize that as we grow up, the complexities of the world can sometimes lead us to forget what truly matters to us. One day, while having a conversation with a second grader, we ended up discussing the supernatural powers we would want. He told me he wants to be able to run at lightning speed so he could run to help the people in need just in time. This is such a simple but heartwarming wish. We had fun planning activities for the kids to learn but what touched me was the positivity and energy they brought us in return. Their wishes and enthusiasm motivate me even more on this dental journey to help the community and population in need of oral treatment. Working at the Southwest CDC this summer has truly been a worthwhile and fulfilling experience."



STEM Week: Buoyancy lesson with aluminum foil boat-penny contest



Art & Music Week: Slime, weaving fish, windpipe made by straws



Sports week: Tennis ball rolling activity on mini golf course