

**Bridging the Gaps**



# Combating Food Insecurity and Promoting Wellness at Lutheran Settlement House

## Student Interns:

Zoie Bissic, Temple University, School of Social Work - College of Public Health  
Jared Dickson, Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University

## 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 Preceptor:

Meg Finley, Senior Services and Nutrition Director, Lutheran Settlement House

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

### Lutheran Settlement House

Started in 1902, Lutheran Settlement House (LSH) serves over 6,000 community members each year. LSH provides a wide range of services for the Philadelphia community. The senior center at LSH holds activities, informational sessions, and meals throughout the week for the members' wellness and enjoyment. LSH provides food services through their Hungry to Healthy program for the community of Fishtown and surrounding areas. There is a food pantry Monday through Friday, but LSH also distributes fresh produce and other perishable goods as part of their Choice Pantry and Fresh Farm Stand every Thursday. LSH offers services to those experiencing housing insecurity through the Jane Addams Place, which works to provide shelter to families across Philadelphia. Additionally, LSH offers domestic violence services that provide counseling and support for survivors of domestic violence.

<https://www.lutheransettlement.org/>



## BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Members depend on LSH to provide socialization, nutrition and wellness. The seniors regularly participate in health, art, and fitness classes. Senior members rely on free lunch every day. Additionally, LSH hosts a free community meal every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday each month. There are also celebrations for holidays that include a food distribution basket. During the week, the senior center is open to the community and distributes produce and canned goods. The community nutrition programs are open to all regardless of age, income, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. These events have created a sense of community in LSH that COVID removed from a lot of people's lives.

## TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The BTG interns combated food insecurity and promoted wellness at LSH by serving as Community Advocates and Pantry Assistants. LSH assists community members experiencing food insecurity through their Hungry to Healthy program. The interns organized food deliveries, packaged food distributions, arranged the food pantry, and assisted about 300 families weekly with signing-in, gathering their food items, and entering new clients into the site's database. The interns also conducted a cardiovascular health and smoking cessation presentation. Additionally, the interns promoted oral health by distributing informational flyers along with oral health supplies.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS

- Organized food pantry and distributed produce and canned goods to about 300 families weekly
- Assisted seniors with financial, health, or personal resources
- Presented cardiovascular health and smoking cessation resources to seniors
- Tabled with oral health supplies and resources during food pantry
- Distributed food vouchers for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

## REFLECTIONS

**Zoie Bissic:** "Working with the Lutheran Settlement House in Fishtown gave me a lot of insight into the problems of the local community, but visiting other BTG sites across Philly showed me multiple communities and their individual struggles. Serving the community showed me that although we can't save anyone with a brief interaction, we can work to help individuals feel supported by their community by providing education on health and wellness. The BTG program made me realize that one moment of support could help someone for a long time. I hope to use my memories from this experience to remember the importance of serving each client as an individual throughout my career as a future social worker."

**Jared Dickson:** "While I was aware that Philadelphia has a significant number of underserved populations, I lacked firsthand experiences that would allow me to understand the extensive hardships endured in these Philadelphia communities. Hearing about the health disparities in Philadelphia communities only goes so far, but my BTG experience at Lutheran Settlement House made these disparities, such as food insecurity, clear and definite. The gratitude expressed by our food pantry clients each week demonstrated the impact that the simple service of providing a variety of fresh produce and nonperishable food items can have on the health and wellness of individuals. I am confident that the experiences and lessons learned from this internship will prepare me well in caring, connecting, and listening to my future patients as a physician."