



Serving those who Served

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Academic Preceptor: Dr. Zvi Gellis PhD, University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy & Practice.
Community Preceptor: Yarelli Morales, MPH. Voluntary Service Specialist.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Veterans Affairs Medical Center provides healthcare services to veterans in Philadelphia and its surrounding areas. <https://www.va.gov/philadelphia-health-care/locations/corporal-michael-j-crescenz-department-of-veterans-affairs/>

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The VA goals are providing lifelong healthcare services to eligible military veterans at the 170 VA medical centers and outpatient clinics located throughout the country. A challenge is making veterans aware of the benefits that are available to them. For example, the Pact act was the most expansive healthcare and benefit expansion effort ever put into place by the United States department of Veteran Affairs. See pictures below of "Vet Fest" which was a carnival that we had this summer to get veterans and their families to come out and learn about the Pact act as well as have a fun day in the summer heat.



TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps University of Pennsylvania Intern worked on the 6th floor in the Center for Civic Engagement at the VA in Philadelphia to serve those who served this past summer. They worked in the food pantry unloading, organizing, and preparing the food to be given to veterans in need. The intern also was a part of the "My Life My Story" programs which had the intern interviewing patients about their lives. The interns wrote biographies to help the veteran's medical providers have a better understanding of who their patient is and their experiences. During the hotter weeks at the VA where the temperatures were into the 90s there was a huge effort by the VA to make sure bottles of water were being handed out. The intern handed out a lot of water bottles during these weeks and spread happiness through a good attitude but most importantly a good sense of humor.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS

- *Vet Fest was a huge success
- *Navigating the nine floors of the VA
- *Sense of humor shared by staff and veterans



REFLECTION

Colin Albers "Bridging the Gaps this summer at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center allowed me to service the veteran population once again. As an undergraduate student at Ohio State, I was an intern at the Columbus VA Medical Center which is where my desire to serve those who served began. During the first week of the program, it was like I had never left. The sense of home is unmatched with the amazing sense of humor that the veteran population possesses. It was a good feeling when I could provide a veteran in need with clothes, personal hygiene, and other resources. I feel that I now have a better understanding of the needs of the veteran community in Philadelphia. I am forever grateful to the Bridging the Gaps programs for the opportunity to work with employees and volunteers who share my passion to serve those who served"