

Bridging the Gaps



Fostering Connection and Relation with Youth at the Red Shield Family Residence

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Community Preceptors: Katie Barnhart, MSW, Assistant Director, Red Shield Family Residence
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COMMUNITY PARTNER

The Red Shield Family Residence at Salvation Army is a safe and welcoming emergency housing program that offers supportive services to equip families with the necessary tools to achieve self-sufficiency. Weekly case management and child-centered resources are provided. This institution welcomes individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, or age. Red Shield is located at 715 North Broad Street, Philadelphia 19123. [Red Shield Family Residence Website](#)



BACKGROUND

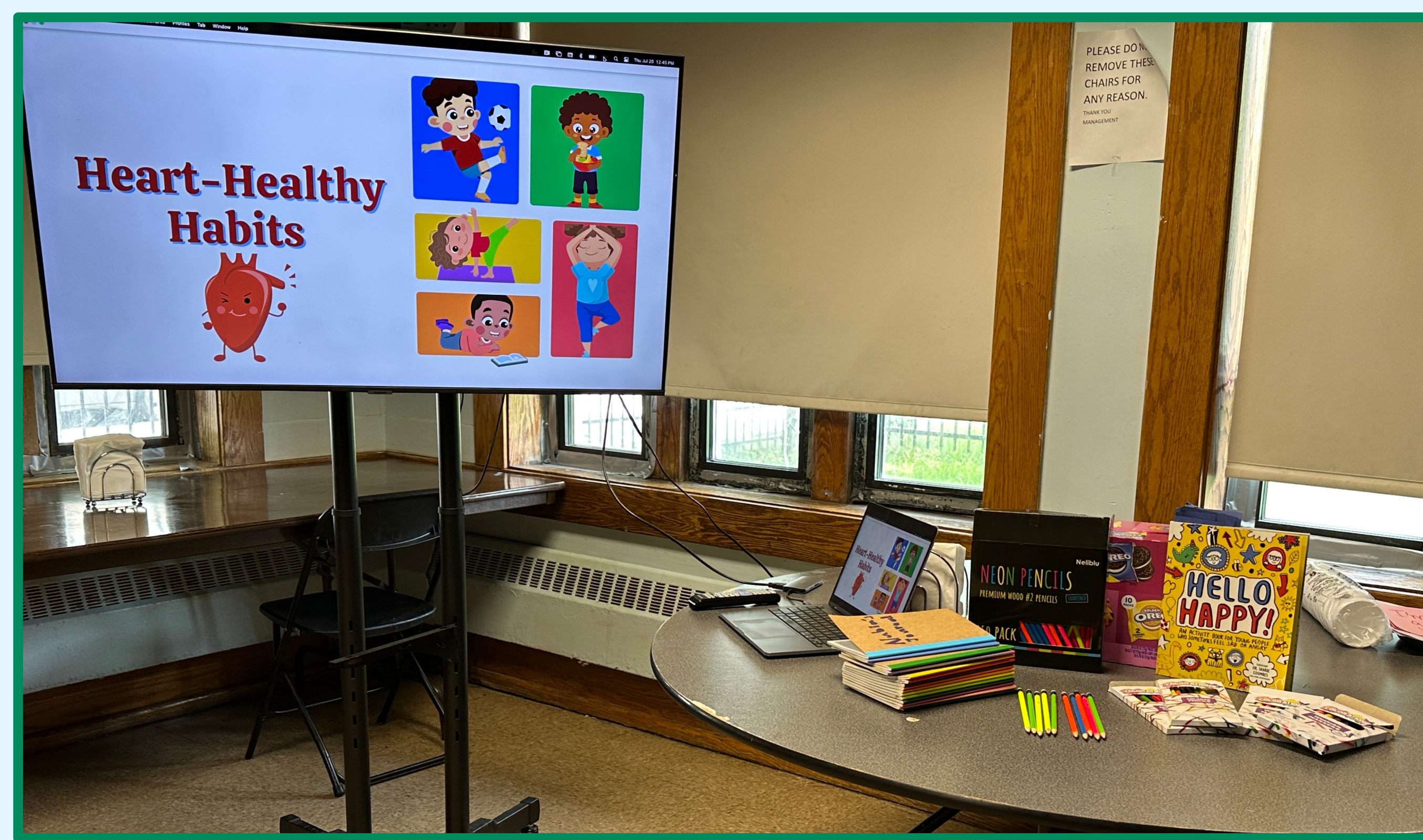
- The first step toward ending homelessness is grasping its root causes. It is essential to consider structural factors, such as housing market dynamics, alongside individual factors that increase a person's risk of becoming homeless.
- Philadelphia's Continuum of Care (CoC) for the homeless adopts the Housing First model, eschewing prerequisites for access to permanent housing besides those faced by an average renter. The city has seen tangible success; from 2018 to 2022, there was a 22% reduction in Philadelphia's homeless population, both sheltered and unsheltered.
- Still, the demand for emergency shelter throughout Philadelphia remains high. In FY22, 12,428 people spent at least one night in a city-funded shelter. Youth and young adults made up 8% of this group.
- Children experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience worse physical and behavioral health outcomes, underlining the importance of initiatives aimed at supporting this population.

AIMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Students learned about cardiovascular health in a child-friendly manner, focusing on the impact of stress on the human body. We addressed that the 'fight-or-flight' response is the body's stress response and identified where stress manifests in our body.
- We introduced heart-healthy habits, including healthy eating, movement, journaling, and drawing.
- The children also participated in various field trips and programs such as visiting the Woodmere Museum, attending the Beauty and the Beast Play, going to Skateplex, and participating in art therapy.

TEAM EXPERIENCE

The BTG interns worked on a project that addressed cardiovascular health, focusing on the impact of stress on the human body. We examined how stress affects them holistically, and how life transitions like homelessness can be a risk factor for long-term stress and anxiety. Our presentation included information on heart-healthy habits and stress management techniques. Our goal was to help kids develop heart-healthy habits that they can incorporate into their daily lives.



TEAM REFLECTION

In our work with children and teens at Red Shield Family Residence, we learned about the complex dynamics of housing insecurity. Despite challenging circumstances, every kid embodied a spirit of resilience and optimism. There is a lot we could learn from their uncanny ability to turn any situation into a time for joy and playfulness. However, we also know that resilience is not a stand-in for the support these children need. Within the framework of this program, we were able to create an environment with a dual purpose for the young residents. One aspect served to foster the simple joys of being kids, while the other emphasized the importance of expressing emotions, navigating anxieties, and reaffirming self-worth. These kids did not just give us a chance to teach - they gave us a chance to learn, and we will use these lessons to guide our approach to patient care and social support.