



# St. Christopher's Hospital for Children Back to School Summer Carnival

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## COMMUNITY PARTNER

The Center for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs is located within St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. They offer comprehensive care to patients (newborn to age 21), including those with complex illnesses and those dependent on medical technology. Their team of pediatricians, nurse practitioners, care coordinators, social workers, and medical assistants, provides support in accessing medical appointments, referrals, educational resources, and important services. Their office also is pivotal in producing the Back to School Carnival.

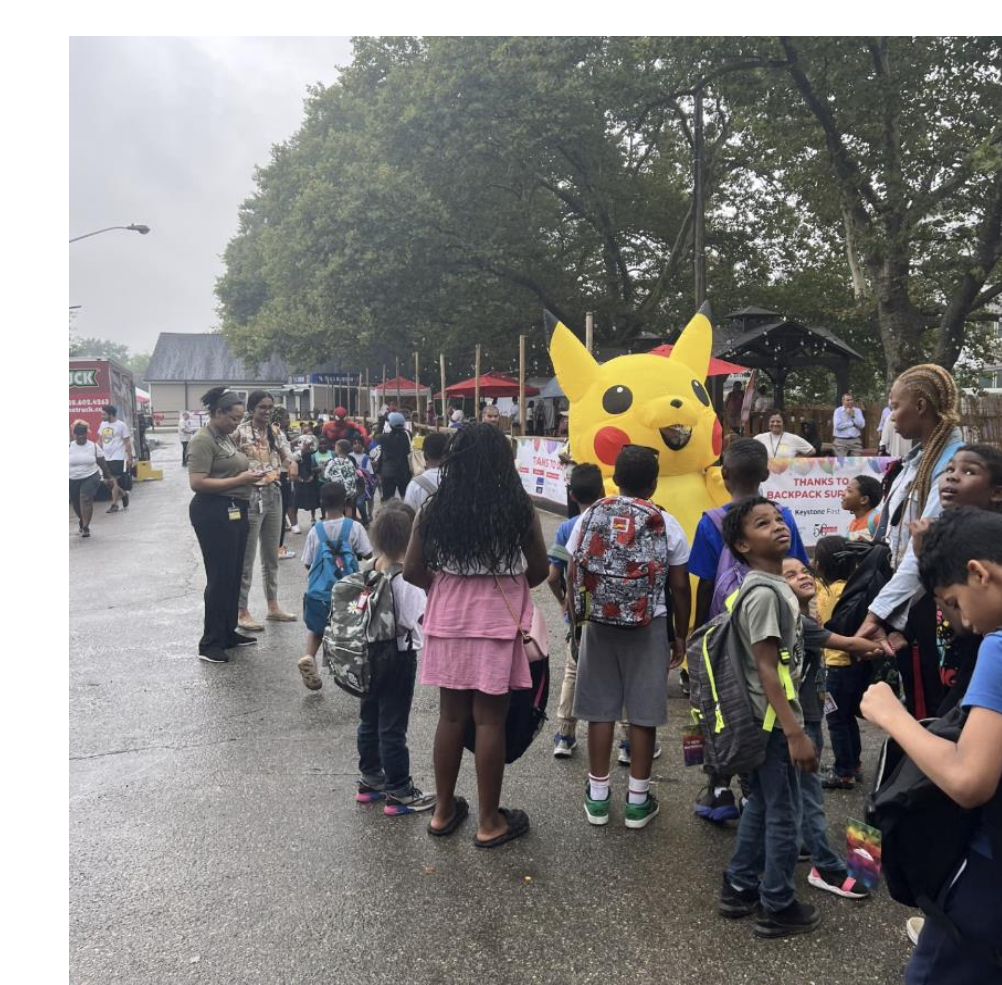
## BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Approximately one-in-four households in Philadelphia live in deep poverty, more than 50 percent below the federal poverty level, which negatively impacts children's academic outcomes, hindering their ability to learn and concentrate, especially during early childhood. St. Christopher's Hospital for Children has been assisting patients and children in North Philadelphia and nearby communities by distributing backpacks filled with supplies and connecting families to essential health and social services resources to help them prepare for the new school year for over a decade. The St. Chris Back to School Carnival is a well-deserved day of celebration for our community and the dedicate partners looking to make an impactful difference

## TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Each year, the Center for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs holds a Back-to-School Carnival to provide families in the Philadelphia community with health resources and the children with backpacks filled with school supplies to help prepare them for the new academic year. In previous years, the carnival was held virtually due to COVID-19, but this year the carnival was held in-person. To prepare for the backpack drive and carnival, the Bridging the Gaps student interns aided in fundraising, planning, and ordering the supplies. The interns' main project was coordinating the vendors for entertainment, food, and desserts. In addition, the interns dedicated time towards organizing and preparing set up for this in-person event.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## REFLECTION

*Sarth:* "My time at St. Chris was one of the most fulfilling, rewarding, and educational roles I have ever held. Being responsible for organizing a large-scale community event certainly entailed enriching challenges, but seeing the smiles and laughter of the children from low-income families as they received free school supplies, food, and entertainment made it worthwhile. This project helped me realize the struggles faced by members of the community and understand that as a future physician and community leader, I have the power to enact change for the better. I feel privileged and honored to have served in this capacity at St. Chris, and I gained tremendous insight in how I can continue to serve my community throughout my career."

*Ethan:* "It was a unique experience to be able to plan and coordinate this event. The community served by St. Chris is a type that I'm passionate about working with throughout my career in medicine, so the opportunity to interact with them outside of the typical hospital environment is something I'll be forever grateful for. The excitement that you can see on kids faces when they hear about the carnival and backpack drive is priceless. Realizing that without events like this, those families may not have the capability to send their children to school with the everyday essentials, is a difficult pill to swallow. Early community involvement and engagement can help these kids reach their true height and support families in need. Going forward in my career, I hope to pioneer these type of events in any hospital/organization I work with and be a community leader passionate about supporting those who more than deserve it."