

# Bridging the Gaps



## Connecting Through Difference

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### COMMUNITY PARTNER

**Programs  
Employing  
People**

Education, Jobs & Support  
For People With Disabilities

**Programs Employing People (PEP)** is a nonprofit organization that was founded to give people with intellectual and physical disabilities access to social, vocational, educational, therapeutic, recreational, and employment possibilities. Disability is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental or physical functioning and adaptive skills, such as information processing, communication, personal care, and social behaviors. The program matches individuals with activities and employment that fit their abilities, needs, and interests and works with them to create plans to help them meet their goals.

PEP serves nearly 300 people with intellectual or physical disabilities from Philadelphia and the nearby suburbs each year. Disability is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental or physical functioning and adaptive skills, such as information processing, communication, personal care, and social behaviors. These limitations can range from mild to severe.



### BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

PEP serves nearly 300 people with intellectual and physical disabilities from Philadelphia and the nearby suburbs each year. These limitations can range from mild to severe. Despite their limitations, people with intellectual disability have great capabilities in many areas, and PEP strives to encourage and strengthen these capabilities. They match individuals with activities and employment that fit their abilities, needs, and interests.

### TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

I focused on work that would help engage the members while they are at the center. I hosted movement sessions twice a day to do this and worked with the employees and members to craft plans that worked with their interests. Through their movement, I worked to expand the participants' communication skills, focused on building community and relationships, and worked to increase the range of motion for the members in ways that are accessible to them.

The two images are of PEP participants: Ms. Maddy and Ameen. Ms. Maddy is part of the Golden Branches Senior Program while Ameen is in the prevocational skills (VOC) program. These are the two individuals I interviewed for the Storytelling Project and who consented to be photographed and interviewed. Ms. Maddy and I shared special conversations every morning. She loves to water the PEP flowers and to get her nails painted on Fridays by her teacher, Precious. Ameen loves to dance to Rock with You by Michael Jackson, LOVES to clap, and enjoys the group outings to Starbucks and 5 Below.

My summer with PEP has re-ignited my passion to cultivate spaces for all ways of being. Each participant I worked with shared with me their unique way of seeing the world. I am deeply thankful for this experience.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS/JOYS

- Increased communication skills
- Worked with the PEP community to craft the sessions
- Hosted movement-integrated heart & oral health lessons
- Used movement to increase mobility, balance, stress management, and social skills.
- Cultivated growth in self-image, cognition, coordination, and community building.



Ameen practicing his teeth brushing with the stuffed dinosaur (Skippy) in our oral health lesson



Ms. Maddy practicing where to feel the heartbeat on Skippy the stuffed dinosaur in our heart health lesson