

Bridging the Gaps



Cultivating Wellness and Resilience through Therapeutic Interventions in Children with Behavioral Challenges

Student Intern: Amy DeAngelo, Drexel University College of Medicine

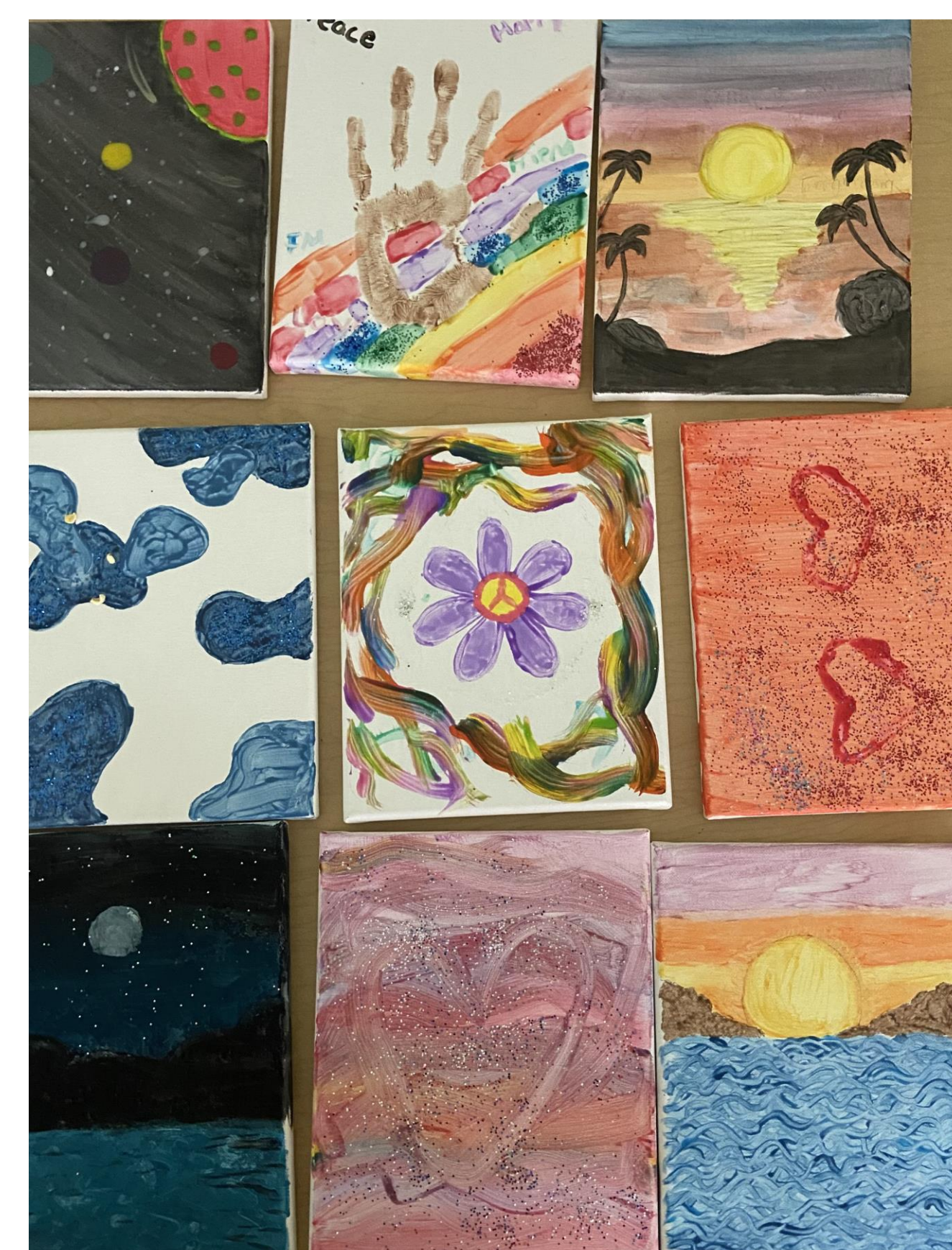
Academic Preceptor: Zach Kassutto, MD, Drexel University College of Medicine, St Christopher's Hospital for Children

Community Preceptor: Keven Weber, BA, Northern Children's Services

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Northern Children's Services, located in Manayunk, is dedicated to supporting the healthy development of children and simultaneously stabilizing families to build even stronger communities. The Wellness Program provides intensive and personalized services that seamlessly integrate therapeutic interventions and academic support both after school and throughout the summer. The program is primarily designed for students referred due to behavioral challenges, which may manifest in multiple school suspensions, poor academic performance, impulsivity, and difficulty adhering to school structure and authority figures. Northern offers individual therapy and group therapy, social skills development, and tutoring, aiming to address these challenges effectively and promote positive outcomes for the students and their families.

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TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

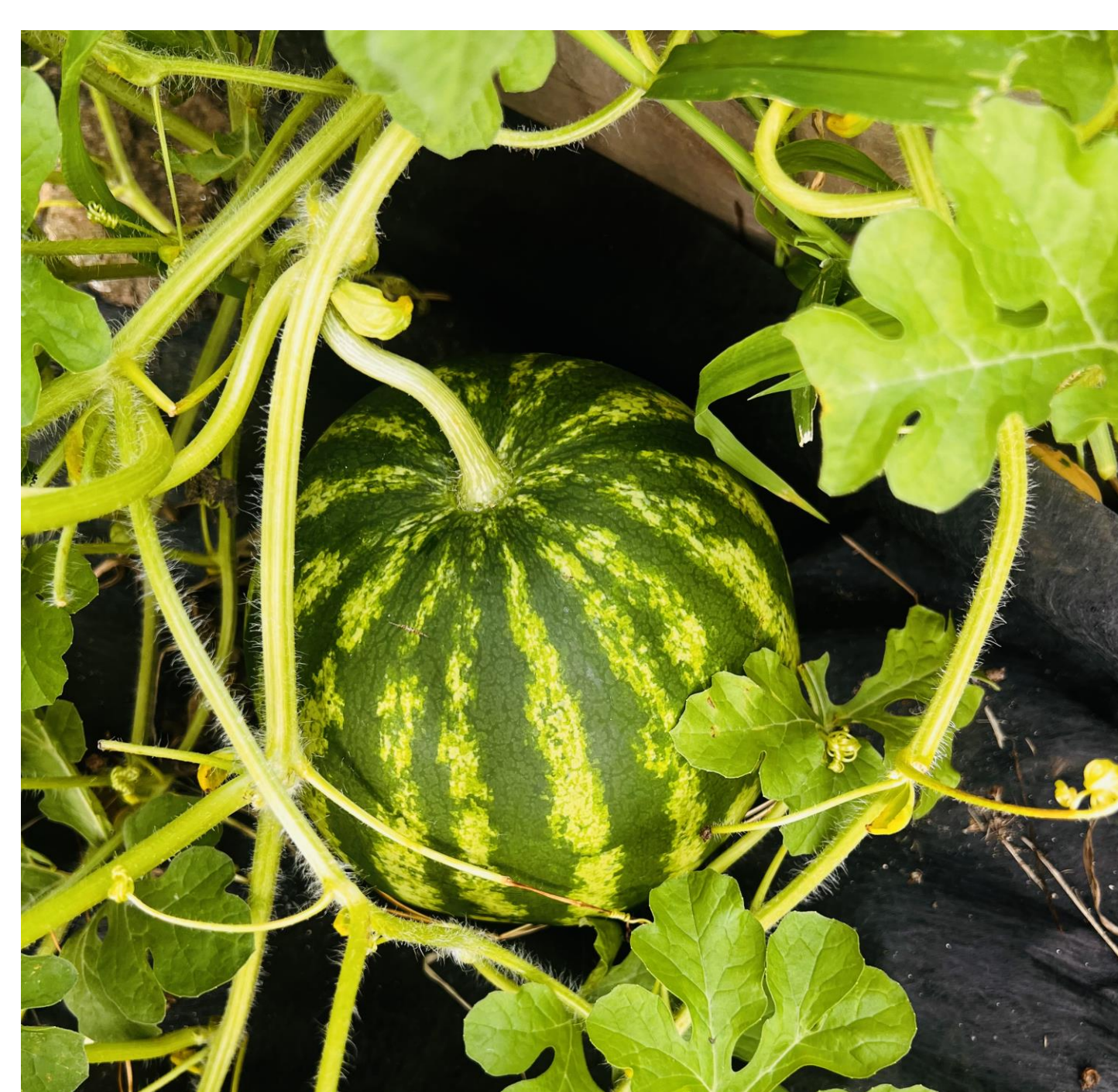
As a Bridging the Gaps student intern, I played a crucial role in facilitating recreational and therapeutic activities for the children in the Wellness Program. I participated in de-escalation techniques, fostering resiliency-building strategies, and practicing the implementation of coping skills. I actively participated in organizing and supervising various recreational day camp activities including arts & crafts, music, gardening, sports, games, and more. I offered valuable academic assistance in reading, writing, and math, reinforcing the children's educational progress and confidence in their abilities.

REFLECTION

Through my experiences, I gained a profound understanding of how social and environmental factors significantly influence children's development and behavior. Collaborating with the therapists exposed me to invaluable coping skills and mindfulness practices that I aim to integrate as valuable resources for my patients. Interacting with the children and attentively listening and participating in their therapy sessions revealed to me the paramount importance of trust and support in creating a safe space for children to express their feelings openly. Additionally, tutoring the children further reinforced the value of meeting individuals where they are, while simultaneously fostering their confidence in their abilities both inside and outside the classroom. I am grateful for my experience at NCS and hope to incorporate all I have learned this summer to provide better care to my patients.

CHALLENGES

- Behavioral management difficulties
- Impulse control
- Undeveloped coping skills
- Temporary placement as an intern and building trust in a short period of time
- Sociocultural views; engrained lessons regarding violence and respect



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Provided academic support services in the form of assistance with reading, writing and math
- Promoted physical activity
- Educate children on how to check pulses
- Formed bonds with children through de-escalation techniques and coping mechanisms
- Guided educational excursions to farms, hiking trails, and camping sites
- Lead activities such as gardening, art classes, music, and sports