



Bridging the Gaps
2025-26 Health Action Report

Combining health-related service for under-resourced populations with community-responsive training of future health and social service professionals

As we concluded our 35th program year, we celebrated the premiere of the BTG documentary film. We also mourned the loss of Frances Ola Walker, a steadfast advisor and collaborator. We dedicate this annual report to her.

In Memoriam

Frances Ola Walker

January 20, 1939 - December 30, 2025



Frances Ola Walker was a visionary community leader, organizer, activist, advocate, and partner throughout Bridging the Gaps’ history. Guided by love and dedication to service, she worked tirelessly to build a world where health and well-being are accessible to everyone.

“

Throughout my life, I have always loved people. ... It is through love that all things are possible. ... It is when people call on you that lets you know you make a difference. That is so rewarding in itself when you can make a difference in people’s lives.

Frances Ola Walker

Bridging the Gaps Documentary



On October 6, 2025, we rolled out the purple carpet for the premiere of *This Too is Healthcare: Bridging the Gaps*, a feature-length documentary supported by a three-year capacity-building grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We are profoundly honored to have worked with the award-winning filmmaker, Peabody recipient, and cultural activist André Robert Lee, whose insight and skill have ensured the 35-year legacy of Bridging the Gaps.



This Too is Healthcare: Bridging the Gaps explores the vital intersection of academic health institutions and community engagement. Mr. Lee’s direction masterfully illustrates how BTG is reshaping the healthcare

workforce by linking community service and professional training through mutually beneficial partnerships, while highlighting a proven model for addressing the complex challenges faced by our most marginalized populations.

The film is designed to spark dialogue around the future of health and healthcare, initiate new partnerships across multi-sector networks, and develop strategies for health professions education, lifelong learning, and community-based service.

We are offering the film, along with a post-viewing discussion, to academic institutions and community, professional, and grantmaking organizations.

Our Mission

Bridging the Gaps (BTG) links the provision of health-related service for under-resourced populations with the interprofessional training of health and social service professionals.

Our 35th year was one of celebration, self-reflection, and documentation of a program that, since its beginnings, has worked to be responsive to the world around us.

Our documentary, *This Too is Healthcare: Bridging the Gaps*, by the filmmaker André Robert Lee, is now a feature-length film and is making the rounds.

We continue to engage with an extraordinary group of people and organizations (students, community leaders, faculty, and grantmakers) to share expertise, serve, advocate, and learn from each other. Our efforts, as always, are aimed at helping to transform systems for optimizing health and well-being for all.

We are grateful for our collaborators and partners who share our goals and challenge us to remain relevant in this ever-changing world.

With gratitude,
Lucy Wolf Tuton, PhD
for the BTG Network

BTG Network

PHILADELPHIA CONSORTIUM

Hillary Bogner, MD, MSCE
University of Pennsylvania

Nasheeka Conix
University of Pennsylvania

Elissa Goldberg, MSS, LSW
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BTG Program Director

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Thomas Jefferson University

Ellen Martinak, MS
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BTG Program Director

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Drexel University

Laura Mullin, MS
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Lucy Wolf Tuton, PhD
University of Pennsylvania
BTG Executive Director

Zoë Van Orsdol, MA, MPH
Thomas Jefferson University
BTG Program Director

Brian Work, MD, MPH
Temple University

Jerome Wright, MSW, LSW
Temple University
BTG Program Director

COOPER MEDICAL SCHOOL OF ROWAN UNIVERSITY

Mara Gordon, MD
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University
BTG Program Director

Paige Person, MPH
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University

Anthony L. Rostain, MD, MA
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University
BTG Program Director

LAKE ERIE COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE (LECOM)

Jennifer Cummings, DO
Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine
Seton Hill Campus
BTG Program Director

Mary Haus, MD
Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine
Seton Hill Campus
BTG Program Director

Leah Labranche, PhD
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of Osteopathic Medicine
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Noelle R. Thielman, PhD
Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine

LEHIGH VALLEY HEALTH NETWORK

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DeSales University
BTG Program Director

Abby S. Letcher, MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

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University of Pittsburgh
BTG Program Director

Sarah Papperman, MPH
University of Pittsburgh

BTG 2025-26 Advisory Board

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Gwen's Girls; Refocus ED

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BTG Program Director, Emeritus

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*Teaching Professor
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Dornsife School of Public Health*
- Tariem Burroughs, PhD, MEd, MSODL, FNAP**
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Dornsife School of Public Health*

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Ellen Funk and Associates*

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Public Health, Nursing, & Medicine
University of Pennsylvania*

Dolores Reiley Hillas
Community Advocate

Ty Holmberg
*Co-Founder and Co-Director
Sankofa Community Farm
at Bartram's Garden*

Willie D. Little, MSW
Community Health Advocate
- Maria Pajil-Battle**
Community Advocate

Nick Pitcavage
Executive Producer/Filmmaker

Estelle Richman
*Past Secretary of Public Welfare
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

Anthony Singleton
*President/Chief Executive Officer
Educators 4 Education*

Walter Tsou, MD, MPH
*President
Philadelphia County Medical Society
Past President
American Public Health Association*

Thomas Vernon, MD
*Former Vice President
Merck Vaccine Division
Former Executive Director
Colorado State Department of Health*

Frances Walker
Community Organizer

Dwayne Wharton, MEd
*Co-Founder & Senior Advisor Principal
Just Community Strategies*

BTG Alumni Network

The BTG Alumni Network (BTGAN) offers lifelong opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and fellowship among former student participants. [Join Today!](#)

Our network continues to grow!
This year has been productive and enriching. We collaborated in developing the [BTG Network Directory](#), where alumni and other partners can update their profiles and connect with members of the BTG Network. We completed several seminars, held our inaugural

BTGAN Book Club, and look forward to connecting at the 36th Annual Symposium.

Now more than ever, we need healthcare providers with a strong social justice orientation. Being that professional in a rapidly changing world is an infinite journey, and BTGAN provides alumni with invaluable opportunities to learn, teach, and be showcased as we work to eradicate health inequity. We look forward to further growing this network as we explore how alumni can benefit from the exceptional human capital that is BTG.

Warmly,
The BTG Alumni Network (BTGAN)

BTG Alumni Network Co-Chairs



Hillary R. Bogner
MD, MSCE
BTG CHIP 1993



Marjorie Dejoie-Brewer
MD
BTG CHIP 1993



Roopali Kulkarni
DMD, MPH
BTG CHIP 2016

BTG Program Components

CHIP (All Locations)

BTG Community Health Internship Program

BTG CHIP is a summer internship that matches students with community agencies/organizations, taking into account community site needs, professional disciplines, and student interests. Whenever possible, students work in interprofessional teams. Students also participate in didactic sessions where community members and health professionals help them gain the skills and knowledge to be effective providers for under-resourced populations.

In the fall, BTG program locations host their own symposia to engage community representatives, public health officials, agency personnel, grantmakers, and university faculty and staff in the work of the program and to provide students with the opportunity to present their summer projects. The Annual Philadelphia Symposium includes representation from all program locations.

BTG CHIP Programmatic Themes

Given the impact of tobacco use, oral health, and cardiovascular health on overall health, BTG offers students access to mentors and tools to support health education and activities at the community level. In 2025, [students created robust educational resources](#) on these topics.



BTG 2025 TO-DATE FACTS & FIGURES

CHIP TO-DATE

667 Community Sites Served

since inception

450 Philadelphia	76 Erie	13 Lehigh Valley	40 New Jersey
74 Pittsburgh	9 Reading	2 Seton Hill	3 Other Locations

6,571 Students Participated

since inception

5,217 Philadelphia	466 Erie	129 Lehigh Valley	220 New Jersey
502 Pittsburgh	22 Reading	6 Seton Hill	9 Other Locations

143,403 Days of Service Provided

from 2000-2025

107,595 Philadelphia	12,506 Erie	3,371 Lehigh Valley	5,714 New Jersey
13,264 Pittsburgh	532 Reading	179 Seton Hill	242 Other Locations

OTHER PROGRAMS TO-DATE

BTG Seminar Series

Fall 2003 – Spring 2026

3,115
Students

Attended at least one seminar; some attended multiple seminars

BTG Community Health Rotation Program

Fall 2003 – Spring 2026

427
Students

Completed the Community Health Rotation Program

BTG Community Health Scholars

Fall 2006 – Spring 2026

264
Students

Graduated as Community Health Scholars

BTG Program Components (continued)

Other Programs (Philadelphia Only)

BTG Seminar Series

This series draws on the expertise of BTG’s multi-sector network, including community partners, alumni, academic health centers/universities, and others. The sessions are designed to augment professional curricula in various content areas and to offer concrete strategies for addressing issues affecting under-resourced populations. BTG offers continuing education credits for many of these seminars.

BTG Community Health Rotation Program

This advanced community rotation experience offers students a collaborative interdisciplinary approach to health and healthcare delivery for under-resourced populations.

BTG Community Health Scholars Program

Students who complete the BTG CHIP, Seminar Series, and Community Health Rotation Program graduate as BTG Community Health Scholars.

Storytelling Project

The [Storytelling Project](#) provides students with an opportunity to learn about their community site from the perspective of a representative community member. Students are introduced to the topic of “narrative medicine” as the basis of the project and are encouraged to use the

medium of their choice (audio, video, painting, drawing, writing, etc.) to represent what they learned. (See the [student project summaries](#).)



35th Anniversary Symposium

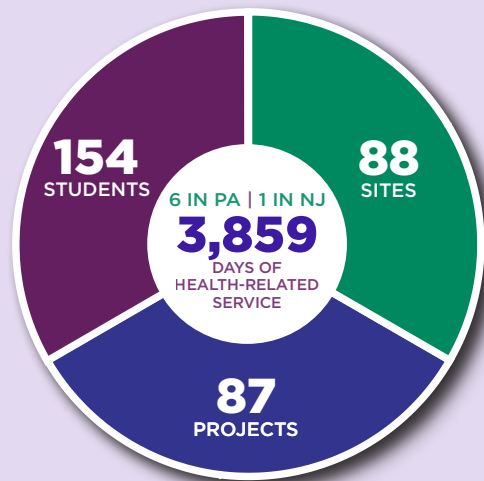
The 35th Anniversary Symposium was held on October 7, 2025, at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Following the BTG CHIP student poster session, Fred Gray, a 94-year-old civil rights activist, state legislator, and attorney, accepted the 2025 BTG award

and delivered the keynote address. Afternoon sessions featured lightening rounds with BTG alumni and community partners on projects in progress, problem-solving roundtables, and a storytelling presentation by two alumni and a community partner.



BTG 2025 FACTS & FIGURES

CHIP 2025



Professional Disciplines

- Creative arts in therapy
- Dental medicine
- Education
- Health and rehab sciences
- Law
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Physician’s assistant
- Podiatry
- Public health
- Social work
- Veterinary medicine

OTHER 2025

BTG Seminar Series

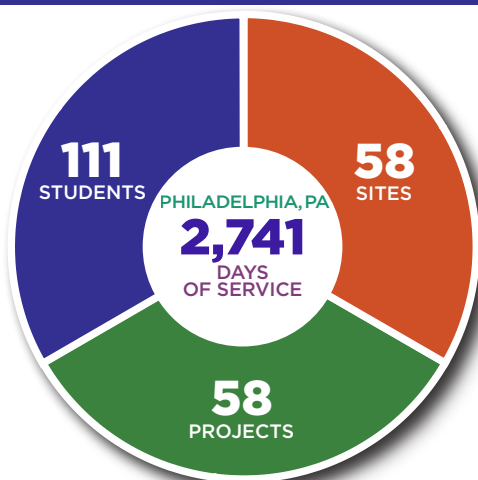
209
Students
Attended at least one seminar

BTG Community Health Rotation Program

17
Students
Participated in the Community Health Rotation Program

BTG Community Health Scholars

12
Students
Graduated as Community Health Scholars



PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

- Creative arts in therapy
- Dental medicine
- Law
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Podiatry
- Public health
- Social work
- Veterinary medicine

STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Assessing community resources
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Health-related client education
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Cardiovascular health
- Communication (language/literacy)
- Diet and nutrition
- Mental health
- Oral health

** Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.*

Philadelphia Program Participants

Participating Institutions

Drexel University, Temple University, Thomas Jefferson University, and University of Pennsylvania. The Lehigh Valley, Drexel University Reading, and Cooper Medical School students participated in Philadelphia's core curricular sessions.

Philadelphia Small Group Leaders

Jocelyn Jones Arnold
Pat Dooley
Elissa Goldberg

David Malloy
Rayn Philips
Darcie Rudolph
Anthony Singleton

Zoë Van Orsdol
Crystal Wortham
Jerome Wright



“During my BTG experience, I learned so much — not just at my site, but also during the Wednesday sessions where different speakers came to talk with us. We covered all kinds of topics like heart health, quitting smoking, how to handle tough situations calmly, and the overdose crisis. Each session taught me something new and helped me see just how many different areas public health touches.

Eddie J. Sanchez Jr.
Temple University
School of Pharmacy

“The most resonant takeaway ... has been the importance of optimism, joy, and laughter despite challenges or adversity. Witnessing friendships blossom through collaboration and teamwork truly demonstrates [my site's] mission of empowering girls to be strong, smart, and bold. ... As a dance/movement therapist, I plan to remember the connections I have made with the girls and continue to encourage approaching all community members with authenticity, positivity, and trust.

Lauren Fader
Drexel University
College of Nursing and Health Professions
Creative Arts in Therapy

“This summer reaffirmed for me that the heart of healthcare is showing up, listening, and bearing witness. It's in helping someone navigate their insurance, find their lost records, or simply feel seen during an impossible day. BTG gave me the privilege to do just that. And I will carry those moments with me for the rest of my career.

Puneeth Guruprasad
University of Pennsylvania
Perelman School of Medicine



Philadelphia Program Participants (continued)

DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Program Staff and Faculty

Elissa Goldberg, MSS, LSW
Program Director
 Laura Mullin, MS

Academic Preceptors

Homaira Azim, MD, PhD
 James Buehler, MD
 Tariem Burroughs, PhD, MEd,
 MSODL, FNAP
 Charlene Chen, MD
 Esther Chernak, MD, MPH, FACP
 Stacy Ellen, DO, FAAP
 Annette Gadegbeku, MD
 Jeremiah Goldstein, MD
 Renee Kottenhahn, MD, FAAP
 Clarissa Lacson, PhD, MT-BC
 Steven J. Peitzman, MD, FACP
 Kristen Ryczak, MD
 Emily Spengler, MD
 Kathryn Stroup, MD
 Daniel R. Taylor, DO
 Kelley White, MD

Community Preceptors

Louisa Benatovich, BS
 Shania Boone
 Agnes Brown
 Jessica Chou
 Julie Conway, SLPD, CCC-SLP, ATP
 Jonathan Deutsch, PhD, CRC, CHE
 Andrea DiMola, MS
 William Fraser

Teresa Giardina, MEd, OG
 Cherice Gordon
 Monica Harmon, MSN, MPH, RN
 Suzannah Hartzell
 Geremi James, LSW, MSW
 Amanda Jernigan, LCSW
 Dianne Johnson, MPA
 Evan Kaye, MPA
 Renee Kottenhahn, MD, FAAP
 Conny Lockwood
 Monica Mallory-Whitmore, DO
 David Malloy, MSW
 Devynne McClelland
 Stacey Moonjeli
 Theresa Moran, RN, MSN
 Sara Ray, PhD
 Rachel Sherman, MPH
 Anthony Singleton
 Victoria Sirois, MA
 Kathryn Stroup, MD
 Daniel R. Taylor, DO
 Renee Turchi, MD, MPH, FAAP
 Patricia Veltri
 Shanise Weatherbee, MA, LPC
 Morgyn Yates, PhD
 Russell Zerbo

“I leave this summer changed. Not just because of what I witnessed, but because of who I witnessed it with. The women of [my site] ... hold grief and joy in the same hand. They teach not with words, but with presence. I was reminded ... that real healing starts in relationships. That care isn't limited to clinics or charts. And that if we want to make a dent in health disparities, we have to begin by really listening. I'm beyond grateful to BTG ... and to [my site] for teaching me how to love harder, listen fully, and hold my ground when things get heavy. This isn't a goodbye, it's a beginning. A deeper kind of commitment to community, built on care, respect, and the quiet power of showing up.

Sonia Dalal
 University of Pennsylvania
 School of Dental Medicine

“Their [the BTG interns] involvement continues to energize our work and expand our reach.

Mercy Howard
 Beyond Literacy (BeLit)

Philadelphia Program Participants (continued)

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Program Staff and Faculty

Jerome Wright, MSW, LSW

Program Director

Brian Work, MD, MPH

Academic Preceptors

Jerome Wright, MSW, LSW

Community Preceptors

Jackie Harvey, BA, CESC

Shirley Moy, MSW

Grace Neeld, BS

Jonathan Schmid, MSW

Cleo Smalls, MBA

Charmaine Sudler-Milligan

Lassiter Williams, MSS, LSW

THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY

Program Staff and Faculty

Zoë Van Orsdol, MA, MPH

Program Director

Rosemary Frasso, PhD, CPH

Academic Preceptor

Zoë Van Orsdol, MA, MPH

Community Preceptors

Barbara Coleman

Kara Friesen, MA

Zakiyyah Harris

Shawna Murray, BSW

Devon Taylor

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Program Staff and Faculty

Bridget McCormick, MS

Program Director

Hillary Bogner, MD, MSCE

Donald L. Boyer, MD, MEd

Nasheeka Conix

Dalmacio Dennis Flores, PhD, ACRN, FAAN

Johanna K. P. Greeson, PhD, MSS, MLSP

Ellen Martinak, MS

Abby Quinn Peterson, DMD, MPH

Elizabeth Powell, DDS, MPH

Lucy Wolf Tuton, PhD

Brittany Watson, VMD, PhD, MS, DACVPM

Academic Preceptors

Hillary Bogner, MD, MSCE

Donald L. Boyer, MD, MEd

Dalmacio Dennis Flores, PhD, ACRN, FAAN

Johanna K. P. Greeson, PhD, MSS, MLSP

Abby Quinn Peterson, DMD, MPH

Elizabeth Powell, DDS, MPH

Brittany Watson, VMD, PhD, MS, DACVPM, MS

Community Preceptors

Affissath Anjorin

Mark Atwood, MS

Beverly Bradley, LCSW

Brad Cary

Kate Cerrone, MSN, CRNP

Angelo Cirrincione

Julie Conway, SLPD, CCC-SLP, ATP

Shelby Davies, MD

Melvin Draughn

Mariana Folco, MSW, LSW

Kara Friesen, MA

Michael R. Galvan, MS

Teresa Giardina, MEd, OG

Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MEd, FAAP

Madison Helmick, MA

Elizabeth Hensil

Ty Holmberg, BA

Frances D. Hoover, MBA

Mercy Howard

Jeanene Johnson

Dorothy Johnson-Speight, EdD, MHS, LPC

Liba Judd

Sharon Katzenbach, CRNP

Traci Kennedy, MPA

Deborah Lowenstein, LCSW

Kyle Macklin

Nya McGlone, MS

Lynette Medley, MEd

Ed Miller

Jiana Murdic, MS

Julie Nelson

D. Daphne Owen, MD

Elizabeth Porter, MEd

Kaanan Raja, MPH

Sara Ray, PhD

Leah Scherzer, MD

Dana Serafin, CRNP, FNP-BC

Shaketia Sills

Annette Silva, RN

Jackie Simmons

Anthony Singleton

Lydia Sit, MD

Alison Sonnenschein

Lorraine Thomas

Shalese Reaves Thomas

Maggie Webb, MPH

“This summer, we had the opportunity to host students for seven weeks, and their contributions significantly enhanced our programming and outreach. They assisted with a variety of initiatives that align closely with our advocacy goals ... Their involvement not only supported our ongoing programs but also strengthened our ability to advocate for senior health and wellness through education, engagement, and community partnership.

Julie Nelson

Philadelphia Senior Center

“I learned a lot about interprofessional teamwork in my Wednesday sessions in BTG, as well ... Each week I was challenged with what I didn't know, what I assumed, and what impact I could make right now as a medical student growing into my career.

Cheyenne Frank

Thomas Jefferson University
Sydney Kimmel School of Medicine

Philadelphia Community Partners

African Family Health Organization (AFAHO)

American Heart Association, Breathe Free PA

American Lung Association

Asylum Pride House

Beyond Literacy (BeLit)

Broad Street Love

Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice

Center in the Park

Children First

Clean Air Council

College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Mutter Museum

Covenant House Pennsylvania

Depaul USA

Drexel Food Lab

Drexel University Community Wellness HUB

Educators 4 Education (E4E)

Frankie's World

Gaudenzia Philly House

Get Fresh Daily

Girls Inc.

Greater Philadelphia Health Action, Inc.

Greener Partners

Hall-Mercer Community Mental Health Center

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy

Human Good, Tioga Presbyterian Apartments

Inglis House

Legacy Youth Tennis and Education

Lenfest Center for Community Workforce Partnerships

Lutheran Settlement House

Make-A-Wish Philadelphia, Delaware, and Susquehanna Valley

Mazzoni Center

Merakey – Police Assisted Diversion (PAD) Program

Mercy Neighborhood Ministries

Mothers In Charge, Inc.

Nationalities Service Center (NSC)

No More Secrets Mind Body Spirit Inc

Old Pine Community Center (OPCC)

Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Philadelphia Family Pride

Philadelphia FIGHT

Philadelphia Senior Center

Prevention Point Philadelphia

Puentes de Salud

Red Shield Family Residence

Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram's Garden

Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse

Social Needs Response Team (SNRT)

Southwest Community Development Corporation

Spectrum Health Services

St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

Center for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Center for the Urban Child

Summer Meals Program and CAP4Kids

Students Run Philly Style

Sunrise of Philadelphia Summer Camp

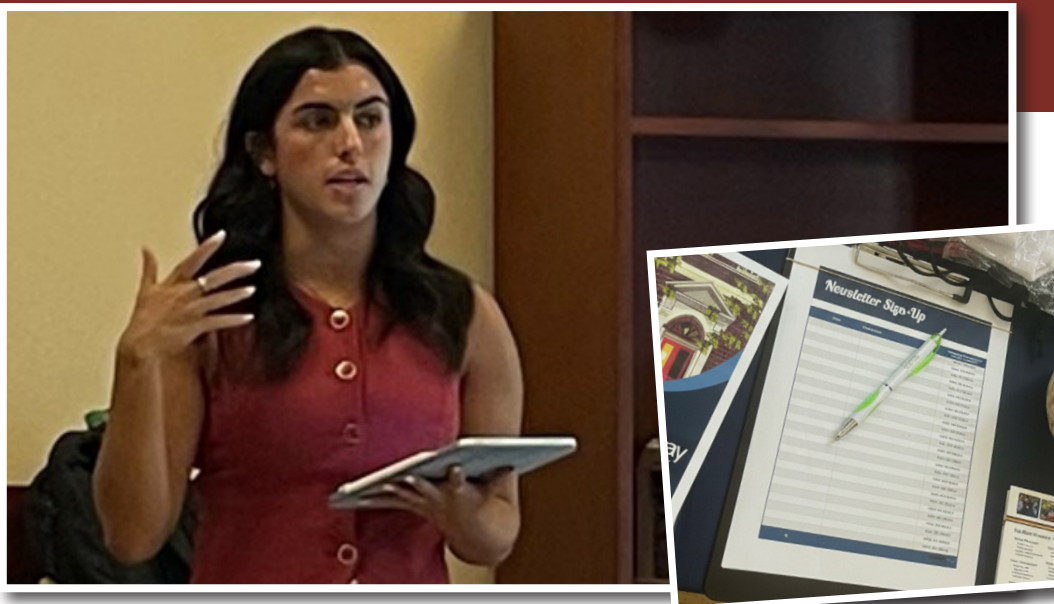
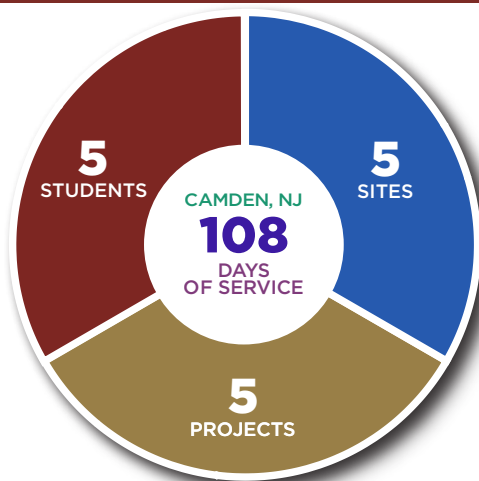
The Drexel Kindergarten Bridge Program

To Our Children's Future With Health, Inc

Visitation Homes

William Way LGBT Community Center





PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

- Medicine



STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Advocacy
- Assessing community resources
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Health-related client education
- Linking clients with health resources
- Planning, organizing or implementing health/recreational activities
- Social service intervention

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Childcare
- Diet and nutrition
- Environmental health
- Exercise
- Homelessness/housing
- Insurance/social services
- Mental health
- Personal hygiene
- Poverty
- Substance use
- Transportation
- Women's health

* Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.

Program Staff and Faculty

Mara Gordon MD
Program Director
Anthony Rostain MD, MA
Program Director
Paige Person, MPH

Academic Preceptors

Mara Gordon, MD
Anthony Rostain, MD, MA

Community Preceptors

Andrew Adams
Stephanie Berroa
Martha Chavis, MA
Amir Gatlin-Colon
Megan Lepore, MS
Kevin Moran
Veronica Ramos-Cruz, MS, MSW
Maya Shenoy, MPH, NCNTT
Laura Sorensen
Jessica Tkacs, RN, BSN, RS

Community Partners

Camden Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
Camden Coalition
Center for Family Services

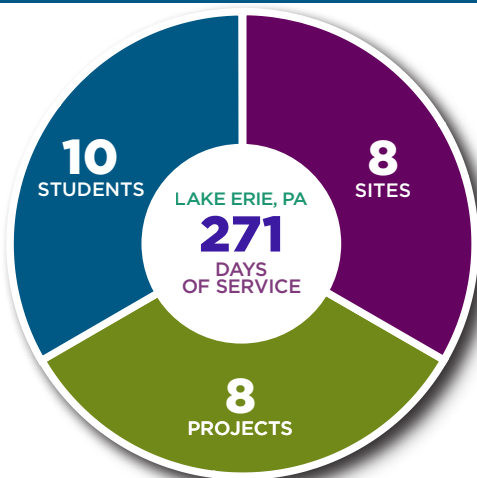
Joseph's House of Camden
The Cooperative, Southern New Jersey
Perinatal Cooperative

“I know I will carry this summer — the stories I heard, the wounds I treated, and the moments of connection — with me for the rest of my life, and I will ensure that those who are affected by the systemic injustices and environmental disadvantages suffered by people like the clients I served will always have a place in my practice. I will continue to serve and advocate for them in my medical career.”

Alexandria Holroyd
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University

“The experience allowed medical students to witness socioeconomic barriers that impact one's ability to care for themselves. ... By listening to the stories of shelter guests and staff, I realized how important it is to break the stigma surrounding homelessness and ... substance use disorder. BTG lectures educated us on important topics such as gun violence, smoking cessation, harm reduction, vaccine efficacy, and reproductive health. These topics will be essential in the changing political climate and during my time as a physician.”

Yash Valia
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University



PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

- Medicine



STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Assessing community resources
- Client interviews
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Evaluation of existing programs
- Health-related client education
- Oral health activities
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities
- Research on health/social/environmental topics
- Teaching living skills

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Cancer
- Communication (language/literacy)
- Computer literacy
- Diabetes
- Diet and nutrition
- Exercise
- Mental health
- Obesity
- Oral health
- Personal hygiene
- Physical disability
- Transportation

** Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.*

Program Staff and Faculty

Leah Labranche, PhD
Program Director
Noelle R. Thielman, PhD

Academic Preceptors

Colleen Cole-Jeffrey, PhD
Elizabeth Ferrer, PhD
Christopher C. Keller, PhD, CPH
Randy Kulesza, PhD
Leah Labranche, PhD
Jack Lee, PhD
Noelle Thielman, PhD
Robert Waters, PhD

Community Preceptors

Anna Brzozowski
Tiffany Frey
Marie Heberlein, TRS, PCHA
Didi Howard, RN, IC
Danielle Lesik, MA, LPC, MT-BC
Tonya Moyer, NHA
Brian Smith
Mary Styn, NHA

Community Partners

Barber National Institute
Brevillier Village
LECOM Health Nursing and
Rehabilitation Center
LECOM Medical Center and
Behavioral Health Pavilion

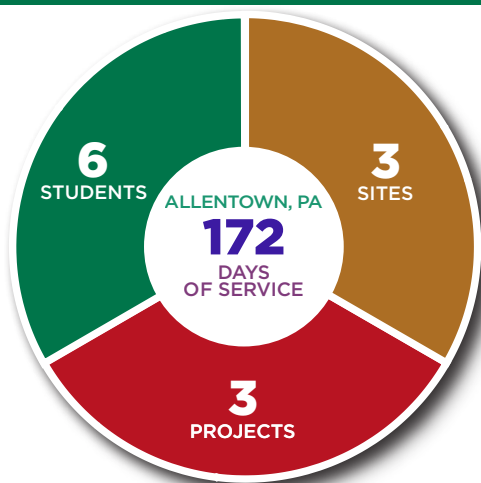
LECOM Senior Living Center
Mercy Center for Women
Parkside Regency at South Shore
Voices for Independence

“During my time in the BTG program ... I developed a deeper appreciation for the vital role each healthcare professional plays in delivering high-quality, compassionate care. Observing the collaboration between physicians, nurses, therapists, social workers, and support staff showed me that effective care relies on mutual respect and shared purpose.”

Olivia Greenwood
Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine

“My experience ... was both eye-opening and deeply rewarding. I witnessed firsthand how compassionate, community-based care can transform the lives of residents, families, and staff alike. Through daily interactions, shared stories, and the opportunity to observe care across disciplines, I learned the value of presence, communication, and dignity in healthcare. [My site] reminded me that healing often begins with simply being seen, heard, and valued, and that's a lesson I'll carry with me throughout my journey in medicine.”

Meghana Ravi
Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine



PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

- Medicine
- Nursing
- Physician's assistant

STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Advocacy
- Assessing community resources
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Direct service delivery
- Literacy activities
- Oral health activities
- Other activities
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Cardiovascular health
- Childcare
- Communication (language/literacy)
- Diet and nutrition
- Exercise
- Homelessness/housing
- Immigrant issues
- Mental health
- Oral health
- Personal hygiene
- Race/ethnicity
- Substance use
- Violence

* Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.

Participating Institutions

DeSales University
Temple University/St. Luke's School of Medicine

Program Staff and Faculty

Tricia Bernecker, PhD, RN
Program Director
Abby Letcher, MD

Academic Preceptor

Tricia Bernecker, PhD, RN

Community Preceptors

Tina Amato, MS, LDN, RD
Abby S. Letcher, MD
Naomi Melendez
Andrea Wilson, PhD

Community Partners

Alliance Hall of Allentown
Casa Guadalupe Center
Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV)

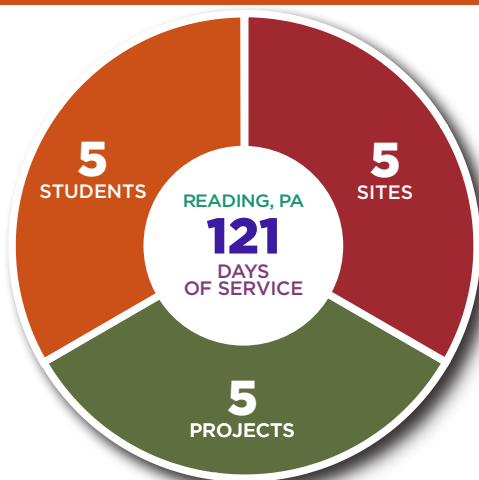
“This experience has encouraged me to utilize the skills I developed in this program within my profession, understanding that there is much more to a person than what is on the surface, and to provide the best service possible, you must consider the person within and all of the factors that affect their lives.

Rachel Baffour
DeSales University
School of Nursing

“Our interns were integral to the success of our summer program. Their connections and insights were highly valued. We are deeply appreciative!

Andrea Wilson
Casa Guadalupe Center





PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

- Medicine



STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Advocacy
- Assessing community resources
- Client interviews
- Clinical healthcare
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Direct service delivery
- Health screening
- Health status tracking
- Health-related client education
- Linking clients with health resources
- Literacy activities
- Oral health activities
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities
- Research on health/social/environmental topics

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Asthma
- Budgeting/personal finances
- Cardiovascular health
- Childcare
- Diabetes
- Diet and nutrition
- Exercise
- Homelessness/housing
- Insurance/social services
- Mental health
- Obesity
- Oral health
- Personal hygiene
- Physical disability
- Poverty
- Race/ethnicity
- Substance use
- Women's health

* Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.

Participating Institution

Drexel University College
of Medicine at Tower Health

Program Staff and Faculty

Holly Metzgar, DO, FACOG, NCMP
Program Director

Academic Preceptor

Holly Metzgar, DO, FACOG, NCMP

Community Preceptors

Kate Alley
Alexis Fick
Christine Folk, RN
April McNally
Alyssa Messner
Jordan Rodriguez
Rus Romanov
Robert Turchi
Jess Umbenhauer

Community Partners

Helping Harvest Fresh Food Bank
Hope Rescue Mission
Lighthouse Women & Children's
Center
Mary's Shelter
Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading &
Berks County

“Whether I was packing food in the warehouse, helping distribute items at mobile markets, or collecting feedback from neighbors, I felt that my work was part of something larger. This experience has broadened my perspective on issues of hunger and equity and has inspired me to stay involved in community-based work. I leave this internship with a deeper understanding of both the challenges people face and the power of collective action to create meaningful change.

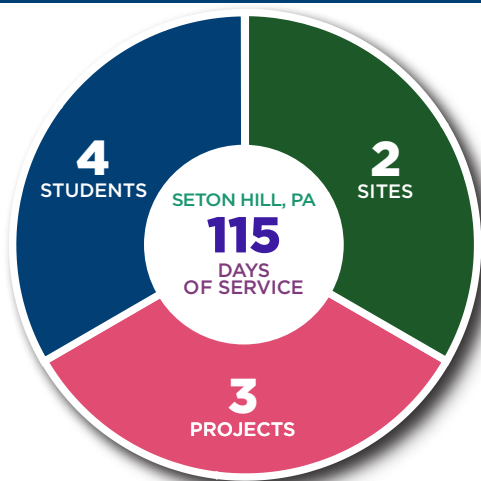
Gautham Ramachandran

Drexel University
College of Medicine at Tower Health

“My [experience] was incredibly impactful. Connecting with the [site's] residents offered a unique glimpse into the challenges some of our most vulnerable community members face, beyond the scope of what is explicitly defined as healthcare. I developed a deep appreciation for the staff and the intersectional nature of their work in case management. In addition to the services ..., [I observed] so many strong partnerships with community organizations. It was very inspiring to see how many people care so deeply ... This passion for service ... profoundly resonated with me and is something that I hope to personally cultivate and take with me into a career as a physician.

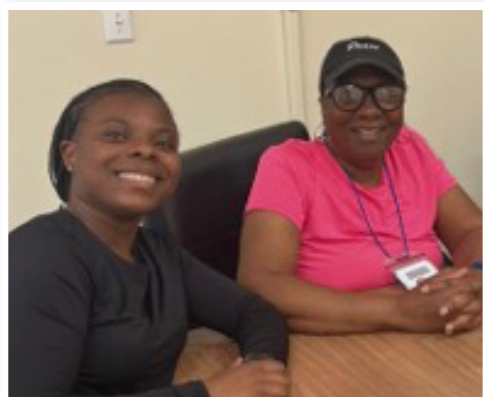
Julia Teymouri

Drexel University
College of Medicine at Tower Health



PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

- Medicine



STUDENT ACTIVITIES*

- Advocacy
- Assessing community resources
- Client interviews
- Community outreach
- Health screening
- Health status tracking
- Health-related client education
- Job/career counseling
- Linking clients with health resources
- Oral health activities
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities
- Research on health/social/environmental topics
- Social service intervention
- Teaching living skills

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Budgeting/personal finances
- Diet and nutrition
- Homelessness/housing
- Mental health
- Oral health
- Personal hygiene
- Poverty
- Substance use
- Transportation



* Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.

Program Staff and Faculty

Jennifer Cummings, DO
BTG Program Director

Academic Preceptors

Jennifer Cummings, DO
Mary Haus, MD
Victoria Hrach, PhD

Community Preceptors

Carrie Lesniak
Natalie Pacy
Mitchell Samick, MS
Dana Slezak
Matt Tutay

Community Partners

Barclay Place & Westmoreland Drug
and Alcohol Commission Inc.
Westmoreland Community Action

“One of the most rewarding aspects of this experience was seeing how small efforts, like a budget meeting or offering self-care guidance, could make a big difference along the line. This experience will serve as a reminder to me that lasting change starts with just listening and being compassionate. No matter how small your role may be, it may have a huge impact on attaining equity for someone out there.

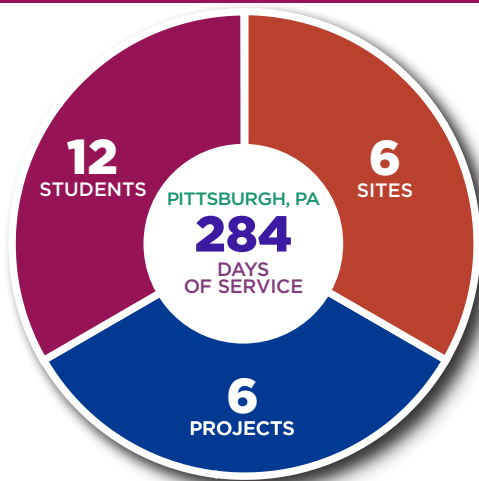
Kumal Siddiq

Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine
LECOM at Seton Hill

“Throughout the past eight weeks, the importance of listening and patience has really stuck with me. Sometimes, the only thing a client or patient might want from a provider is for someone to just listen. Lessons as such are only learned or emphasized in the field, which I hope to carry with me throughout the rest of my career.

Rachael Kopec

Lake Erie College
of Osteopathic Medicine
LECOM at Seton Hill



PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

- Education
- Health and rehab sciences
- Medicine
- Pharmacy
- Public health



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy
- Assessing community resources
- Community outreach
- Community social activities
- Health-related client education
- Oral health activities
- Planning, organizing, or implementing health/recreational activities
- Research on health/social/environmental topics
- Teaching living skills

COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES*

- Access to healthcare
- Budgeting/personal finances
- Childcare
- Cultural health beliefs and practices
- Diet and nutrition
- Environmental health
- Exercise
- Mental health
- Oral health
- Other health issues
- Personal hygiene
- Poverty
- Race/ethnicity
- Substance use
- Transportation
- Violence

* Information reflects only those categories reported by 40% or more of the students participating at this program location.

Program Staff and Faculty

Thistle Elias, DrPH, MPA
Program Director
 Sarah Papperman, MPH, CPH

Academic Preceptors

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 Sharon Connor, PharmD
 Mary Goldberg, PhD
 Nina Markovic, MS, PhD
 Martha Terry, PhD

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 Julia Donnelly, MPH
 Tre McKeithen
 Mónica Méndez, PhD
 Geyzel Mendoza
 Deanna Sinex, PhD
 Cynthia M. Wallace, EdD
 Brandon Ziats

Community Partners

Bible Center Church – The Oasis Project
 Center of Life (COL)
 Latino Community Center
 Reimagine Reentry, Inc.
 Youth Enrichment Services (YES)
 Youth Opportunities Development

“We very much value our continued partnership with Bridging the Gaps. Our experience with BTG interns has always been amazing.”

Brandon Ziats

Youth Opportunities Development

“This program taught me about the impact that community-centered work has, as well as how effective it can be at creating meaningful change. Coming from the very zoomed-in biology perspective, it was eye-opening to zoom out and explore how health is impacted at the policy and community level. I am grateful I got to gain experience in many aspects of community-centered initiatives, such as the grant writing process, curriculum development, and meetings with community partners ... Incarceration isn't simply the result of a 'bad decision'; it reflects a complex web of systemic barriers, personal circumstances, and histories that have been ignored.”

McKenna Brunick

University of Pittsburgh
 School of Public Health

2025-26 Institutional Support

The Bridging the Gaps Program would not be possible without support from our participating institutions. We specifically want to acknowledge:

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Center for Humanism

DeSales University

College of Health Professions

Physician Assistant Studies Program

School of Nursing

Treasurer's Office

Drexel University

College of Medicine

Dean's Office

Department of Educational Affairs

Department of Medicine

College of Nursing and Health Professions

Dornsife School of Public Health

St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

Thomas R. Kline School of Law

Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine

Lehigh Valley Health Network

Center for Healthcare Education

Temple University

College of Public Health

Department of Social Behavioral Sciences

School of Social Work

Lewis Katz School of Medicine

Office of Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Office of Student Support

School of Pharmacy

School of Podiatric Medicine

Thomas Jefferson University

Jefferson College of Population Health

Sydney Kimmel Medical College

Department of Community and Family Medicine

Dean's Office

University of Pennsylvania

Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Department of Biostatistics, Epidemiology, and Informatics (DBEI)

Perelman School of Medicine

School of Dental Medicine

School of Nursing

School of Social Policy & Practice

School of Veterinary Medicine

University of Pittsburgh

School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

School of Medicine

School of Pharmacy

School of Public Health

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Andrew Wilson

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Pittsburgh

Anonymous

Anonymous SPH faculty

Dr. Sharon Connor

**List is alphabetical and may not include all sources of support.*



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